DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 562 HE 006 785

AUTHOR Lichtman, Jane
TITLE Bring Your Own Bag. A Report on Free Universities.
INSTITUTION American Association for Higher Education, Washington, D.C.
SPONS AGENCY Hazen Foundation, New Haven, Conn.
PUB DATE 73
NOTE 138p.
AVAILABLE FROM American Association for Higher Education, 1 Dupont Circle, Suite 740, Washington, D.C. 20036 ($4.00)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$6.97 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Alternative Schools; Curriculum; *Educational Alternatives; Educational Change; Educational Environment; *Educational Innovation; Financial Support; *Higher Education; *Open Plan Schools; Statistics; Tables (Data); Universities
IDENTIFIERS *Free Universities

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This document has four parts. Part 1 defines free universities, describes the origins of the free universities of the 70's, breaks down current free universities into three kinds, and ends with a chapter on teacher-learning processes. Part 2 contains quantitative information - numbers, age, location, enrollments, and funding. Part 3 lists what free universities do and describes the curricula of 67 free universities. Part 4 is a handbook for people who are planning or just beginning to set up a free university in their own area. Some major findings in this document are: (1) free universities developed to meet the needs neglected by more traditional universities; (2) there are three broad kinds of free universities -- those that act like community centers to match peoples' common interests and resources, those that start out in acute reaction to surrounding educational and political conditions, and those that gradually work to change the educational environment while also responding to needs for additional community services; (3) free universities take on the characteristics of other universities as they become older; and (4) free universities surveyed can be characterized as having little growth, being locally inspired, and having low visibility learning arrangements in which needs take precedence over requirements. (Author/KE)

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Bring Your Own Bag

a Report on Free Universities

Jane Lichtman

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Bring Your Own Bag

a Report on Free Universities

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION
FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The American Association for Higher Education, founded in 1870, offers representation in a single organization to persons from all segments of postsecondary education—faculty, administrators, trustees, and students alike from every type of institution, public and private, large and small, two-year, four-year, graduate, and professional.

This diversity of membership underscores AAHE's concern for the broad issues affecting education. The Association believes that such matters as the teaching-learning process, decision making, academic freedom, economic representation, and institutional goals are common interests that can best be served by a coming together of all who share them.

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ERIC

in a nutshell

This book is divided into four parts. The first starts out by defining free u's, describes the origins of the free u's of the 70's, breaks down current free u's into three kinds, and ends with a chapter on teaching-learning processes. Part Two contains quantitative information, the only data currently available on free u numbers, age, location, enrollments, and funding. Part Three lists what free u's do. The curricula of 67 free u's are described in some detail. A look at this section may suggest to you not only what these free u's do, but also what you may be able to do in your own place. Part Four is the "How to Free U" section. It was stuck on as a kind of handbook for people who are planning or just beginning to set up a free university in their own area. Readers who don't need such a handbook can skip Part Four without missing much.

FINDINGS

Here, in a nutshell, are some of the major findings of the study:

Origins. Free u's develop to meet needs neglected by more traditional universities. Many have a symbiotic relationship with a traditional u, and, as often as not, the parent institution adopts many of the free u's programs.

Kinds of Free U's. There are three broad kinds of free u's: those that act like community centers to match people with common interests and resources; those that start out in acute reaction to surrounding educational and political conditions; and those that gradually work to change the educational environment while also responding to needs for additional community services.

Goals. Free u's are changing. The politically inspired anti-establishment free u of the past is being outlasted by centers responding to more practical and immediately useful community interests.

Change. Free u's are not as "free" as they used to be. They take on the characteristics of other institutions as they become older. Free u founders find that both people and organizations need at least a little structure. So formal registration periods, fees to staff and instructors, locks to protect

equipment, office hours, and sometimes even tests are becoming part of the free u scene.

Shared Patterns. The free u's surveyed can be characterized as little-growth, locally inspired, low-visibility learning arrangements in which needs take precedence over requirements.

Statistical Overview. In 1971, the following data applied to free u's:

Number located: 110

Average age: 2.8 years (range: December '64-April '72)

Location: Seven out of ten free u's locate on campuses, primarily at universities enrolling over 12,000 students. Independent free u's are more prevalent in larger towns. When they do open in smaller ones (under 10,000 people), they are started by campus-experienced people.

Who attends free u's: When free u's locate on a college campus, they serve mostly college people; when they locate off campus, they serve the community outside. Most participants are between the ages of 18 and 23, although 25 percent are older and 5 percent are younger. Free u classes involve a broad mix of people; the college student usually interacts with dropouts, housewives, laborers, and professionals.

Size: Contemporary independent free u's come in three sizes, each correlating with different organizational patterns: networks (100-400 people enrolled each term), corporations (500-700), and exdependents (1,000-2,000). Dependent free u's do not have such distinctive features. They fall into two types: student activities (30-800), and alternate institutions (900-3,000).

Finances: Budgets range from $0 (supplies, facilities, and resources all donated) to $20,000 per year. On-campus free u's usually depend primarily on student governments for their funds. Independent free u's depend on donations and individual registration fees of less than $15 per term.

Curricula: Half of all courses offered (56%) could be described as centering around the instrumental learning of a particular skill. One out of four courses (28%) are less specific, academic-like courses, most of which are not available to participants elsewhere. Less than a quarter of the courses are "head trips" focused on the achievement of new personal, interpersonal, or mystical insights.

HOW THIS PROJECT CAME ABOUT

In 1970, I knew that free universities existed, but where? Traditional techniques of gathering information didn't work well because many free u people did not respond to mailed inquiries and others were known only

to local community people. No one knew much about free u's, except that they existed.

Since communication at a distance failed, the only way to learn more was to try it close up, to encounter free u people on their own terms and turf, so I went to them. Friends helped convert a blue Ford van ("Henry") into a home. With lots of plywood, nails, and assorted materials, the interior was equipped with a bed, desk, sink, stove, curtains, icebox, pink rug, and sleeping bag. In March 1971, I left with Lena ("mixed dachshund") to find free u's. During 1971, we covered 28,000 miles, stopped in 43 states, and slept in the van (or on the ground) all but fifteen nights. The year was spent getting to know free u people, sometimes for a week and sometimes for a couple hours. Without these contacts, this book could not have been done.

I owe these people the biggest debt of all, but there are just too many of them to name. They shared what they knew and thought, provided meals and offered lodging, comforted and provoked. Thanks to each and all.

Other important people include G. Kerry Smith, who nourished the project and initiated my affiliation with the American Association for Higher Education; Bill Bradley of The Hazen Foundation, which not only funded the project but took an active interest in it; Ken Fischer, Fred Harcleroad, and Max Wise, who spent long days plodding through my rough drafts, suggesting new things and encouraging me whenever contacted; Bill Ferris, whose basic editorial wisdom and headful of good ideas moved this book from an endless series of cluttered notes into a much briefer, more unified whole; Dyckman Vermilye, who was not only warm, encouraging, and helpful, but also seemed to enjoy my often erratic, endlessly indecisive behavior; and the rest of the AAHE staff, who pitched in.

The most important nonperson was Lena, a most faithful companion. She got dragged around the country, was forced to live in an eight- by six-foot van, could seldom sniff familiar ground or chase the same squirrel twice, and often was neglected, but never seemed to mind.

Contents

list of tables and figures

TABLES

FIGURES

This report was made possible by a grant from The Hazen Foundation.

chapter one
a kind of definition

A free u is a community learning center that connects people who want to teach or learn with the resources to meet their needs. It is "a cooperative association of voluntary learning groups investigating a broad curriculum in a variety of old and new styles."[1] So much for formal definition.

To the individual participants, the idea of what a free university is varies as widely as the free u's themselves. Some free u's are departments within conventional universities; others have no affiliation with traditional universities. Some occupy buildings and community centers; some, lacking "found" facilities, manage with post office box numbers only. Some free u's have five courses; others have a hundred. Some have budgets surpassing $20,000; others have no budgets. Some are touchie-feelie; others are academic, craft-oriented, Aquarian, or Jewish. Some locate in large cities, others in villages. Each free university considers itself alone in its community. Each has its own forms, subjects, content, and style. Each feels like a pioneer outcast trying to become more and more a part of its society. Each mirrors the thinking, values, emotions, and preoccupations of its place. But despite the differences and lack of communication among free u's, their patterns are remarkably similar across the nation. Here are some characteristics shared by nearly all:

Emphasis on Aims and Interests of the Students. Free u's arise out of environments in which "learning" is mass-administered. Free u course topics reflect the interests of students. Course and curricular development depend on the voluntary involvement of the whole community. Because students are not obligated to enroll or to continue in attendance, free u's that are not community sensitive cannot survive. "Irrelevant" courses quickly fold. Curricula are broad, often including the affective domain of human development as well as the cognitive. Courses range from carpentry, draft counseling, and divorce workshops to the art in super-hero comics and the sociological aspects of jurisprudence.

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[1] Michael Rossman. *On Learning and Social Change* (Random House, N. Y., 1972), p. 205.

Absence of Restrictions on Participation. Anyone may participate in a free u, as either a teacher, student, or organizer. Anyone can teach; anyone can learn. Learning is often, but not always, at no cost to the participant. When free u's request tuition fees (which are waived for people on welfare and others who cannot pay them), they are less than $15 per term. There are few selection criteria. There are no separations by age, degrees, experience, or test scores. No prerequisites are used to determine where students enroll or what they are capable of accomplishing. , Students themselves decide whether or not they participate, and this results in more heterogeneous groupings. Teachers are volunteers. They are evaluated by their performance, not by their credentials. Bad teachers lose their groups because students drop out or find new resource people; good teachers become known quickly.

Absence of External Rewards and Punishments. There are no grades, failures, promotions, honors, diplomas, or gold stars. No institutional sanctions discipline or retain either a teacher or a student dropout. Teacher and students decide jointly how they will accomplish goals for the group experience.

De-emphasis on the Teacher as Authority. The course "organizer" becomes an assistant for learning rather than the determinant. People who do not feel that they are achieving their own goals leave. Students often become joint investigators in unfinished projects and issues for which there is no single solution.

Active Learning. Seldom is free u learning limited to the classroom. Initial investigative projects often end up in the initiation of community services (free schools, health and legal clinics, local cleanups, organic gardens, street theater troupes).

More than most organizations, free u's are characterized by change, fluidity, dynamic processes. The turnover rate for students, teachers, and administrators is as great as 70 percent each year. Offices, addresses, staff, and curriculum are unusual if constant. *Change,* more than *growth,* describes free u's.

Free u's are both a backlash and a by-product of a highly specialized, developed nation. In the "old days," societies were small enough so that people knew the skills and expertise of others. When they wanted to learn those skills, they simply asked the expert to teach them. If they wanted to learn to build a house, they were helped by friends who had built houses before them. But as communities became larger and more complex, the number of necessary skills, and therefore specializations, increased. It became hard to find enough friends who knew how to do

everything in the more complex society, so people had to rely on specialists. Systems replaced the intimacy that was lost. Free u's arose in part out of this lost sense of community. They are a throwback to an era characterized by dialog and argument, sharing for survival, and integration with the land.

WHY ARE THEY CALLED FREE UNIVERSITIES?

Confirmed academicians declare that free u's have no "right" to call themselves universities. Others ask why, if they're not free (in terms of tuition), they say they are.

The second question can be explained briefly. The "free" of free u refers to the educational process rather than to the cost. Students are free to participate and to drop out. (Grades, diplomas, recommendations, or large initial investments restrict that freedom of movement.) Instructors too are freed from content, space, and institutional sanctions to experiment. They are freed, at one extreme, to "do their own thing"; at the other, they are freed to do nothing. (At both extremes instructors usually end up in spaces without students.) Students and instructors are freed to develop jointly different areas of knowledge. Students want to learn; instructors want to share their expertise. The free u provides the space for the group to decide how that can be done creatively and well.

As for the first challenge—whether free u's have a "right" to call themselves universities—what is so sacred about the term university? One of the earliest universities, the University of Bologna, came into existence when a group of students got together, formed a legal corporation, and hired teachers to teach them what they wanted to learn. There's little difference between this kind of university and many free u's. During the Middle Ages, when the term "university" came into common usage, it referred to a "society, company, corporation, or community regarded collectively."[2] The association of "university" solely with institutions of higher education which confer degrees that are recognized by the state is a modern interpretation of the word.

The names "free university" and "experimental college" develop out of the "unfree" universities and "traditional" colleges. Individual free u's carry the distinction even further, christening themselves the University for Man, the University of Thought, Free Space, and Communiversity. Each of these suggests aims: humane learning, active thinking rather than rote memorization, communities of learners rather than citadels of elitism, loneliness, and privatism. The highlighting of differences rubs off on regular universities because free u's acclimatize the public and the

[2] *Oxford English Dictionary.*

university to new ideas, later permitting their acceptance once people get used to them.

With all the recent literature on school crises and educational reforms, it is no longer shocking to suggest that education may be somewhat less than humane, that academic certitude has crumbled, and that academia itself is under attack as an insular, outmoded place. In the 1972 presidential campaign, Shirley Chisholm said that " 'Old Ivy' must go." She proposed a network of learning centers for commuting, working students who would advance at their own pace.[8] The Free Speech Movement at Berkeley punctured the balloon of the "pastoral college years." As colleges got larger, the relative influence of each student got smaller. More controls were needed, and more regulations imposed; these only deepened the tragedy. Now, for example, one California state college that enrolls 20,000 students a year greets entering students with this notice:

SOLICITING, SELLING, EXPOSING FOR SALE OR OFFERING FOR SALE OF GOODS, ARTICLES, WARES OR MERCHANDISE, THE DISTRIBUTION OF HANDBILLS AND CIRCULARS, AND THE HOLDING OF PUBLIC MEETINGS, PERFORMANCES, RALLIES AND SIMILAR PUBLIC EVENTS ON THIS CAMPUS ARE SUBJECT TO REGULATION. VIOLATIONS ARE PUNISHABLE AS MISDEMEANORS UNDER TITLE 5, CALIFORNIA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE, SECTIONS 42350, 42352, AND 42354.

COPIES OF THESE REGULATIONS AND DIRECTIVES ISSUED THEREUNDER MAY BE EXAMINED IN THE OFFICE OF THE BUSINESS MANAGER, DEAN OF STUDENTS, OR CAMPUS POLICE.

Free u's develop out of these infractions against personal integrity. In place of anonymity, coldness, regulations, rigid time schedules and remote rulings, free u's welcome people with warmth, encouragement, and cooperation. They also encourage students to get involved in meaningful activities outside the classroom. In contrast to the foreboding notice just cited, students at the University for Man in Kansas received this invitation:

AT LAST WE HAVE A HOME WHICH COMES COMPLETE WITH A KITCHEN FOR COOKING CLASSES, ARTS AND CRAFTS SPACE FOR CANDLEMAKING, TIEDYING, ETC., A LIBRARY WHICH CONTAINS THE LATEST IN EDUCATIONAL PERIODICALS AND BOOKS, A NEW POLITICAL SCIENCE COLLECTION DONATED BY LOU DOUGLAS, SECTIONS ON WOMEN, ECOLOGY, BLACKS, SCIENCE FICTION, CRAFTS AND SKILLS . . . AND TWO DOGS IN THE YARD. COME BY AND VISIT US, BUT RIDE A BIKE OR WALK IF YOU CAN — WE HAVE A TERRIBLE PARKING PROBLEM.

---

[8] *The New York Times*, April 9, 1972.

Compared to regular colleges and universities, even the "language" of free u's is different. It emphasizes this "freeing" rather than obligations, regulations, and requirements. The bywords of free u's are these: free courses, free environment, free tuition, no grades, and freedom to experiment, create your own learning situation, and test out new techniques.

Free university life-styles are the antithesis of the mod Madison Avenue man, the efficient "professional" person, and the hard working laborer. The most cherished clothing is informal, comfortable, and often faded. Jeans and work shirts are common. Offices are cluttered with overstuffed furniture, stacks of papers, and posters. The *New Schools Exchange Newsletter, Edcentric, This Magazine Is About Schools,* the *Berkeley Barb,* and *Time* litter free u spaces. (I never saw *Readers Digest, Mademoiselle,* or *Better Homes and Gardens.*) Notes and messages are taped to doors, walls, and windows: "Henry — a photographer from the daily will be at Swedish Massage tonite. Ira." *Radical School Reform, How Children Fail, The Making of a Counter Culture, The Future of Man,* and *Macrobiotic Cooking* are characteristic books.

Catalogs too reflect this informal, eclectic approach to learning. Frequently they are printed in newspaper format. There is no table of contents. Drawings are freehand, sometimes done by children. Media are mixed: catalogs double as posters. Poetry, photographs, community resources, and lively descriptions of courses and organizers create a tentative, incomplete collage. By contrast the catalogs of regular colleges are done on expensive paper, open with the Board of Trustees, close by listing instructors with degrees following their names, and sandwich in between course names, requirements, numbers and obligations.

Free u's are personal, situational creations that reflect individual idiosyncrasies and local situations. When people or events change, free u's change. Their extreme sensitivity has both positive and negative effects. When systems are personally dependent, they allow room for sensitivity, imagination, roundness, creativity, softness, spontaneity, and warmth. They also tend to be capricious, inefficient, and vulnerable. Regular universities are linear, hierarchical, segregated, and orderly, dependable and efficient (at least by comparison). These differences between free u's and traditional u's result in different behaviors, activities, creations, and processes.

Chapter Two
Setting the Scene

Education in the 60's was big business. By the end of the decade, 62 million Americans were engaged full-time in a $70 billion enterprise.[1] Colleges and universities had one-eighth of the total number of students, and spent one-third of the total education budget. The annual expenditures of colleges and universities rose four and a half times in ten years.

In a time when the expenditures quadrupled, student enrollments doubled. In 1960, 3.6 million people enrolled in 2,000 colleges; by 1970, 7.3 million attended 2,525 institutions of higher learning. The size of public colleges especially got larger. Community colleges were opening at the rate of about one a week. By the end of the sixties, almost half of the college students attended only 200 institutions, each having more than 10,000 students.

As more students enrolled in the same institutions, the differences between these institutions lessened.[2] Universities sought to be multiversities with heavy research commitments; four-year colleges aimed to be universities; and the two-year schools sought to become the four-year liberal arts colleges.[3]

But resentment was gathering against the by-products of large size and decreasing diversity. In this massive concern with money, size, facilities, and prestige, the institutions began to serve poorly.

> Large, or even huge, institutions bring out the best in some people—but are wholly inappropriate for others. Their essential defect is a lack of community. Students complain of anonymity, faculty members are unable to find the supposed 'community of scholars'; administrators complain of communication failures and lack of understanding. Everyone complains of parking conditions.[4]

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[1] *Digest of Educational Statistics 1970.* U. S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, National Center for Educational Statistics (Washington, D. C., 1970); and *Education Directory, Part III,* Higher Education, U. S. Office of Education (Washington, D. C.). Most figures in this section were derived from these sources.

[2] Harold L. Hodgkinson, *Institutions in Transition: A Study of Change in Higher Education* (New York, 1971).

[3] Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, *The Academic Revolution* (New York, 1969); Warren Bryan Martin, *Alternative to Irrelevance: A Strategy for Reform in Higher Education* (New York, 1968); and Hodgkinson.

[4] Frank Newman, et. al., *Report on Higher Education* (Washington, D. C., 1971).

Probably the greatest casualty during this expansive decade was the student. Of the over 1 million people who entered college each year, most attended the large universities, and fewer than half completed the first two years.[5] It was not uncommon for freshman students to be in lecture classes with several hundred others, to see their instructors on T.V., and never to speak with even one faculty member. The student was required to compete with peers in order to remain within the arena. Individuality would have to be forestalled for another time.

This condition of anonymity was recognized by some people. Innovative curricula, cluster colleges, new and experimental programs, core plans and individual tutors, residential experiments and special freshman year programs were devised, but relatively few students were affected by these programs.

Growth brought grumbling. Sometimes the grumbling erupted into violence. But these indications that the personal needs of individual students were not being met were squashed by the steamrolling impact of the decade of growth.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE SIXTIES

The combination of more students and more money changed the way that college campuses looked. By the start of the 70's, each campus had a new high-rise building. Square towers, concrete or brick materials, blacktopped paths, and gray-brown colors predominated. Inside there were muted walls and long narrow tunnels with separate, dead-end, soundproofed spaces. Libraries were rectangular buildings; they held long, well regimented stacks of books stripped of their bright dust jackets. Students sat on wooden chairs at sleek sturdy tables under soundproofed ceilings. New campuses scraped away greenery and trees for gray, boxy structures. The new places could not be characterized as places of color, joy, warmth, or sharing. There were no irregular buildings, no fiddle-shaped halls or rounded domes (except those constructed by the students). The new campus buildings were bigger, better, more efficient; they were antiseptically clean, wall-bolted against theft, indestructable, and streamlined. They were built for efficiency by people who probably would never use them.

Each faculty member had his own desk, sharing sometimes the nine-foot square enclosure euphemistically called an office with another animal of the same species. This cubicle was set in the midst of a larger territory designated for the use of one department only. If it was a big department and a lot of people were assigned to this space, it might have its own house

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 1, pp. 87-88.

(for example, the Psychology Building); but usually this department and several others with equally well defined territories coexisted to make up an area of specialization: the Social Sciences Building.

These new buildings with their numerous faculty and even more numerous visitors required even larger facilities to take care of their automobiles. Solution: blacktop parking lots. Five and a half days a week hundreds of cars were herded into their stalls by special traffic directing policemen. But after hours parking lots developed their own curbstone cultures. They were the places where much of the illegal drug trading took place. They were also centers where local pre-college youth gathered, drank beer, and smoked a couple of joints. One college, in fact, hired a special post-adolescent, hippie-looking guard to keep an eye on the almost 200 youths who gathered nightly in the parking lot set aside for faculty cars during the day. Acres of blacktop were probably the least aesthetic spaces on college campuses. What happened within them reflected their form.

Separation was the function of college building and thinking during the sixties. Dormitories were clearly distinct from academic buildings. Student unions were situated apart from academic buildings, usually on the campus periphery. On the campuses of the 60's, living and learning were segregated. Out of dichotomies such as these there arose a need for integration rather than separation.

CAMPUS SCENE

College students of the 50's have been described as silent, apathetic, and collegiate.[6] They were within the mainstream of the American Dream: many were veterans and the mood was one of hope and hard work. Students were pictured as neat and well scrubbed. College men wore white buck shoes, owned gray flannel suits, and sported blue blazers. The women coordinated their matching skirts and sweaters with penny-loafers. Mixers were big and the most popular films were westerns and Hollywood style teenage love romances. Elvis Presley's "Hound Dog" and Pat Boone's "Tammy" were hit tunes. Fraternities flourished, although dissatisfaction with their discriminatory clauses increased during the decade. If students made news, it was because of their riotous panty raids or annual pilgrimages to Fort Lauderdale.

It was primarily in the realm of the arts that students of the late 50's foreshadowed those of the 60's. Albert Camus, J. D. Salinger, Thomas Wolfe, D. H. Lawrence, William Faulkner, and Ayn Rand were popular campus authors. Jack Kerouac initiated the Beat Movement with *On the*

[6] Details of campus life are colorfully and amply provided by Calvin Lee, *The Campus Scene*: 1900-1970 (New York, 1970).

Road in 1957. At the end of the decade, a few European films were shown but Hollywood firmly dominated the college scene. As the 50's passed and the McCarthy influence waned, students began to move away from apple pie American chauvinism to a deeper questioning of their own values.

But the predominant mood of the 50's was concordant. The decade closed gleefully with a feature article in *Life* on the "seasonal shenanigans on college campuses."[7] In the spring of 1959 telephone booth stuffing was the fad. When a school in South Africa jammed 25 students into a telephone booth, American college students tried to top that record. A mass of hairy-legged, grinning college youths, all with crewcuts and bermudas, was pictured piled up in one booth. Alas, all they could squeeze in were 22 men.

If the 50's was a decade of stability and enthusiasm, the 60's was one of intense change and disillusionment. The new decade plunged students into off-campus activity. John F. Kennedy formally entered the presidential arena the first day of the decade. By the end of the year, he was elected. His reign brought a period of intense youthful idealism. John F. Kennedy challenged the college students to become involved, to enter the newly created Peace Corps, to "do for your country." He promised that good intentions and hard work could accomplish miracles. Even the moon would be reached, he vowed, by the end of the decade. Students accepted the challenge and became involved in community, national, and international affairs. They tutored in the Harlems and Fillmore districts of the nation. They flocked to Mississippi for the summers to register voters. They picketed stores with discriminatory racial policies. They protested House Un-American Activities Committee hearings. They marched on Selma and on Washington. They worked to ban the bomb and they cried out against capital punishment. They caught the action, the vitality of the period, and moved with it.

Campus life grew more frenetic, and later more private. Dress styles changed from suburban to the bohemian: jeans, long hair, sandals and boots, loose comfortable clothing. The decade started out with social mixers and fraternity bashes, but that changed by the second half to a life of privatism and introspection. Sororities and fraternities lapsed. Dormitories went unfilled because students moved to off-campus housing. Mixers went unattended. Individuals sought inner understanding through drugs rather than sociability and camaraderie through alcohol.

The decade that started at a feverish pace with the Twist and the Beatles ended on a lonesome, mournful note of Jimi Hendrix. Campus films became increasingly personal and symbolic, showing the influence

[7] *Life*, March 30, 1959.

of foreign directors: Fellini, Antonioni, Bergman. Student-made experimental films often got their first of many showings on the college campuses. Students were interested more in personal statements than the glossiness of Hollywood. Campus theater changed from Broadway productions like "The Boyfriend" to Ibsenesque realism. Guerrilla, street, and theater troupes started, as did free presses, little magazines, and campus radio stations. Following a decade dominated by conformity, the sixties celebrated subjectivity and innocence; it celebrated, and later deplored, "awareness."

As the decade went by, other events encouraged a detachment from commitment. By the end of the sixties, faith in anything or anyone had become foolhardy. John F. Kennedy was gunned down by an assassin. Then Martin Luther King. Then Robert F. Kennedy. Eugene McCarthy was something to rally for, even to cut off beards for, but he lost. The bomb was not banned. Capital punishment was not struck from the books. Discrimination continued; environments deteriorated; the war dragged on. It seemed that the youth had little impact.

Although most students continued to be satisfied with their academic life, there were rumblings of discontent. The Free Speech Movement did more for students than to get a few suspended from the University of California. As the decade waned, more students became attuned to the process of their university education: who ruled, who was ruled, and how it was done. Conflict on college campuses burst the myth of "the best years of your life." Students were called niggers, obeying when told, paying for that privilege, told what to say and think and when to do it.

What do you do when things look so good and then so bad? When the world is one of infinite possibility and then soured dreams? It was at this point that free universities appeared, combining faith in individual capabilities with disappointment in the way things were going, particularly in the academic life.

DEVELOPMENTS IN OTHER AREAS

The rise of free universities was paralleled by developments in other areas: social, political, and cultural.

Popularization of the "Counter Culture"

At the beginning of the 60's, small groups of Beatniks and Hipsters surfaced in Greenwich Village, New Orleans, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. These people were seized upon by the media because they were so outstanding in their differences. Rejecting society's insistence on Apollonian reason, Beats celebrated a Dionysian passion of sex and little known drugs. Their dress was comfortable, casual, and colorful rather than

tailored and uptight. If a multidimensional photograph of American stereotypes had been snapped, the Beats would have been its negative.

College students were the first to stylize Beat fashions. Dress styles changed most, although attitudes toward sexual abstinence and the privacy of affection moved closer to those of the "hippies." During the next ten years, the style set by the early Beats and Hipsters spread from the realm of the counter culture to that of the popular culture.

Experimentation

> Poetry . . . has been torn away from the cemetery of the printed page; painting liberated from its daubed and commercialized canvas; psychodrama removed from the brainwashing factories.[8]

Chaos intruded like a worm in a good, firm apple. Everywhere one turned, there was disruption: black and nude dancers, electronic music, pop, op, and anti art, happenings, Beat poetry, welded sculpture, films without stories, discordant music, spectator involvement, and plotless, seemingly incoherent plays.

There was, for example, the "Theater of the Absurd," for who could find anything rational about it? Martin Esslin, who coined the term, describes it:

> What these writers express is not an ideological position but rather their bewilderment at the absence of a coherent and generally accepted integrating principle, ideology, ethical system, call it what you will, in our world . . .
>
> What is far more important to the concept of the Theater of the Absurd is the 'form' in which this sense of bewilderment and mystery expresses itself: the devaluation or even downright dissolution of language, the disintegration of plot, characterization, and final solution which had hitherto been the hallmark of drama, and the substitution of new elements of form—concrete stage imagery, repetition or intensification, a whole new strange language.[9]

The early Theater of the Absurd was started during the fifties by two writers located in Paris, Eugene Ionesco and Samuel Beckett. New York's first representative was Edward Albee, whose play *The American Dream* (1961) dramatized the change of that dream into a nightmare.

Theater, which had been centered in New York, decentralized with the formation of regional theaters. One, the Free Southern Theater, was started in 1963 in an old truck.[10] It brought theater for the first time to many southern Negroes. During the decade, particularly around universities and big cities, "guerrilla" or street theaters developed. These were

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[8] Jean-Jacques Lebel, a Franco-American painter who was one of the leaders of the Happening Movement, quoted in Esslin, *Reflections*, (New York, 1969), p. 205.

[9] Martin Esslin, *Reflections*, p. 184.

[10] *The Free Southern Theater*, ed. Thomas C. Dent and Richard Schechner (New York, 1969).

amateur groups which performed in the streets of thir own communities with home written political scripts pointing out the evils of contemporary society: racism, prison conditions, pollution.

Similar changes took place in the other arts. Despite all economic and legal barriers, artists made films independent of Hollywood.[11] By the end of the 60's, the regular film "Establishment" would be paralled by "The Underground Establishment," with its own promoters, exhibition channels, distribution centers, publications to advertise and to discuss the films, critics, and groups to export the films for international exposure.

In the press, "free presses" developed around the nation: in large cities like Berkeley, New York, Chicago and Atlanta, as well as in colleges and high schools. Independent press services fed the news of the various undergrounds around the nation. Other communications systems started, among them nonprofit, listener-sponsored radio. New York City's first broadcasting station financed by its listeners started in the first days of the decade.

Developments in Politics: Civil Rights Movement

At the same time as these new artists were surfacing, the first flicker of the civil rights movement appeared. On January 1, 1960, four black engineering students armed with a Bible and some philosophy textbooks sat at a Greensboro, North Carolina, Woolworth counter which was reserved for white people. The newspapers picked up this small action and, like a brush fire, this protest ignited others. Within the year, Howard Zinn estimates that 50,000 people participated in demonstrations in a hundred cities.[12] One year later the sit-ins widened to freedom rides.

The sit-ins and the freedom rides were unique because they were spontaneous outbursts by local people rather than massively organized political actions. The actions came before the organizations and were not run by the "experts" but rather by locally affected people. Free u's are part of this tradition.

The tactic of creating parallel institutions next to legally legitimate ones was copied from the civil rights movement. In 1963, Bob Moses organized the Mississippi Freedom Ballot. In an unofficial election, in which all Mississippians were eligible to vote, a black governor and white lieutenant-governor were elected. While this outcome had a negligible influence on the official governance of the state, it did bring attention to the central fact that Mississippi elections were not free and that blacks could not vote.

During the summer of 1964, northern college students went to Mississippi to register black voters. They also set up Freedom Schools. In many

[11] Sheldon Renan, *The American Underground Film* (New York, 1967).

[12] Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (New York, 1956), p. 16.

ways the Freedom Schools were similar to the sit-ins, freedom rides, the Freedom Ballot, and later to the free u's. People who had never been involved in organizing before started Freedom Schools. Each depended on the unique ideas and imaginations of the people in the particular community. Staughton Lynd, the coordinator of the Freedom Schools Project, answers the question "How do you start a Freedom School?" in the following way:

> This question seems almost funny. Few of us who planned the curriculum and administrative structure of the Mississippi Freedom Schools had any experience in Northern Freedom Schools. And in any case, our approach to curriculum was to have no curriculum and our approach to administrative structure was not to have any . . . So my answer to the question: "How do you start a Freedom School?" is, "I don't know." And if people ask, "What were the Freedom Schools like?" again I have to answer, "I don't know." I was an itinerant bureaucrat. I saw a play in Holly Springs, an adult class in Indianola, a preschool mass meeting in McComb which were exciting. But who can presume to enclose in a few words what happened last summer when 2,500 youngsters from Mississippi and 250 youngsters from the North encountered each other, but not as students and teachers, in a learning experience that was not a school?[13]

Following this experience, northern college students who registered southern blacks went back to their home campuses. Some of them started free u's.

Wrap Up

Is it surprising that education reflected the uncertainties felt elsewhere? In education, as in art, people fashioned new and different products because the traditional "establishment" forms proved rigid, insensitive, out-of-tune, inaccessible, unwieldy, and overly commercialized. The new creations would be spontaneous and incomplete. They would be expressive and emotional rather than objective and remote. Drama went to the streets; poets became orators; new newspapers provided room for different kinds of reporting and analysis; almost-barefoot bearded young lawyers ministered to those who could not afford private legal fees. A fledgling network of little "systems" arose distinct from the other larger "establishments." The free universities are the educational counterparts of these developments in other areas.

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[13] Staughton Lynd, "The Freedom Schools: Concept and Organization," *Freedomways*, April, 1965.

Chapter three
the first free universities

The underlying philosophy for free universities was laid out in the *Port Huron Statement* (1962) of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Although free u's were not specifically mentioned, the document stated that an alliance of students and faculty "must wrest control of the educational process from the administrative bureaucracy." Students must "import major public issues into the curriculum—research and teaching on the problems of war and peace." The style must be "debate and controversy, not dull pedantic cant."[1]

In *Conspiracy of the Young*, Lauter and Howe report that unpublished documents from the summer 1965 SDS convention reveal that the free university was an important topic of discussion.[2] The convention did not agree on any one model since each campus chapter was left to decide. This latitude was in keeping with the SDS credo of "participatory democracy." Between 1965 and 1967, about 12 free universities were direct outgrowths of the work of local SDS chapters.[3] By 1966, SDS began to focus its own efforts on the community, but the seeds for the free university had been sown by these initial models.

The first free universities were "counter-institutions," formed in reaction to the elitism, set curricula, mass educational environments, and apathetic personal interactions characteristic of local campuses. Students in the first free u's tried to create atmospheres and learning opportunities not provided in the colleges. The Free University of Berkeley (FUB) originated during the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley (December 1964). Within days, FUB moved off campus, continued as a community learning center, and offered open community workshops. One year later and 50 miles away, the Free University of Palo Alto (which later became the Midpeninsula Free University) put out its first catalog, which stated:

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[1] *Port Huron Statement.*

[2] Paul Lauter and Florence Howe, *The Conspiracy of the Young* (New York, 1970).

[3] *Ibid.*

> The American educational establishment has proved incapable of meeting the needs of our society. . . . A revolution in American education is required to meet today's needs, and a new type of university—a free university—must provide the impetus for change.[4]

Up the Peninsula nine months later, the first experimental college (a campus-located free university) was inaugurated at San Francisco State College. Differing from the first two, the Experimental College focused on changing the college curriculum by providing an on-campus "counter environment for freedom."

These three free universities foreshadowed the differences among subsequent free universities.

FREE UNIVERSITY OF BERKELEY

FUB was a spin-off of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California, Berkeley. Both community residents and university students wanted to continue the new and highly charged environment experienced by some during the December 1964 protests. To many students, a learning situation in which any one could enter and leave uncontrolled by bells and schedules seemed better than one that stopped just when the interaction and learning started. Those with the academic qualifications often did not have the only good things to say; in fact, others often had better arguments and analyses. Without university bureaucracy, people with similar ideas got together and acted immediately without waiting to go through channels of compromise and approval. Things happened fast. It was this kind of community that was sought. Since it could not be found in the University, FUB never sought partnership or accommodation with the University of California. It settled in the off-campus fringe community, rented an old house, set up courses, workshops, and seminars, and went its own way.

FUB still runs out of an old church several blocks from the University of California. Groups meet every afternoon, evening, and weekend. A bulletin board next to the entrance has overlapping layers of messages, letters from parents to their runaway children, equipment for sale and apartments for rent, and announcements of community activities.

Since 1964, FUB has emerged as a clearinghouse for local alternate-culture activities along with other community agencies such as the Berkeley Free Church; the *Berkeley Barb*, KSAN radio, community profit-sharing businesses, new schools both within and without the public schools, law and architecture collectives, and the Free Clinic. FUB's course enrollment makes it one of the largest currently active free u's. In the fall quarter 1967, it offered 31 courses to 200 participants; three years later 1,200

[4] *Free University of Palo Alto*, Course Catalog (California, Spring, 1966).

people enrolled in 200 courses. Along with arranging classes, FUB has connected people with similar interests and initiated food and housing cooperatives, medical, legal and counseling clinics, ecology action groups, street theater troupes, community schools, literary journals, and communes.

All this has not happened without problems. Simply creating new organizations for new kinds of human interactions and assuring their availability is not enough. Too many people continue to treat the free university as they do other institutions: they take from it what they can and return as little as possible.

> In the tradition of American Satety Valves, [Free University of Berkeley] has also served as a stop-gap institution, a therapeutic halfway house for dropping out and still having Something to Do. Our ties with each other and the needs expressed in the Free U are often arbitrarily chosen and temporary—and there is an insidious expectation that somebody else is fitting together the structure of a university where you can find all the New Life skills.[5]

FUB's budget is a case in point. The free university relies on course fees of $10 per participant. These fees can be waived if participants are on welfare, if they volunteer to help with the office work, or if they otherwise do not pay. The fees collected are used to pay the rent, telephone, supplies, brochure costs, and coordinators' salaries; any leftover funds go to other community groups. Each term, an average of six out of ten participants pay the full amount. If every participant paid, there would be no financial problems; but budgets now are figured to balance when two out of three participants pay. Many of those who do not pay do not make up the difference by working in the office. In short, FUB has many freeloaders. Most other places protect themselves against such liberties by insisting that benefits accrue upon the payment of the fee: no fee, no service. But this requirement contradicts the goal and policy of education for everybody, so the free university remains open at the risk of bankruptcy.

While creating a community based on sharing, openness and trust, the free university is fallow ground for "rip-offs." Theft is a common problem. More critically, too often the stealing is not done by John Birchers or other antagonists but rather by insiders. In 1971, for example, one of the free u coordinators withdrew $1,000 from the FUB account and disappeared. Since then, precautions have been taken to protect not only the funds but the buildings and the free university's equipment.

FUB's growth has been intermittent; in fact, impermanence, flux, and experimentation are more characteristic of FUB than constancy and growth. People come to the free university to seek a new world, an open society, cooperative and sharing relationships rather than competitive

[5] *Free University of Berkeley*, Course Catalog (California, Fall 1970).

ones. They also come to learn skills as well as to analyse and discuss. FUB is the way station, the park bench at which to gather and to find people with similar needs. When needs are met (or perhaps can't be met), people "split."

MIDPENINSULA FREE UNIVERSITY

Two groups combined to form Midpeninsula Free University (MFU). The earlier dates to January 1966 when a group of Stanford University doctoral candidates announced the formation of a public, democratic, egalitarian "free university" for the whole community. Later an on-campus educational reform group, The Experiment, merged with the Free University of Palo Alto to form the Midpeninsula Free University.

Its earliest initiators had more in mind than alternate education. They knew Stanford University well, and didn't like what they knew. Those people who were dissatisfied with Stanford wanted to create an active center to teach left-wing political ideologies. Their first-term courses included studies in institutional analysis, political theory, and community organizing. Sample topics were Problems of Organizing, American Youth in Revolt, Non-Violence and Its Social Organization, and Dialectical Materialism. Herbert Marcuse, Bettina Aptheker, and regional directors of SNCC comprised the first forum speakers. In addition to courses and forums, MFU originators hoped that by exposing the community to radical ideas a political power base composed of radical whites, blacks and chicanos would result. They encouraged minority-group members who could not even consider education at the elitist Stanford University to join with the free university and to initiate cooperative action projects based on their own needs.

This short-lived radical political orientation foreshadowed other leftist free u's around the nation. Blacks especially did not seem to be interested in studying theories and radical ideas. They preferred forging alliances with other Third World groups such as the Black Panthers and Venceremos, a revolutionary chicano organization. Nor were other community participants, particularly whites and Stanford University people, too interested in political theory. Within two months after the first brochure announcing course topics was distributed, new ones were announced: E.S.P., Psycho-dynamics of Economic Behavior, Improvisational Drama, Italic Handwriting, Beginning Piano, Jazz, and The Film--hardly subjects around which to form an ideological unity. During its five and a half years of existence, MFU seesawed between a weighty imposed curriculum of topics critical of society and an apolitical smorgasbord of crafts and touchie-feelie-sensitivity encounter groups.

MFU enrollments rolled with the curriculum. When courses in radical politics were few, community involvement was high. At the height of this involvement (winter 1969), the catalog listed 278 courses, 20 of which were political; 1,275 people enrolled that quarter. During that active time, the free university stimulated and operated other community ventures: a free u store and print shop, a professional services cooperative, a community center with a coffee house. "Friends" of the free u offered their homes to those without housing. The *Free You* magazine expanded to 64 pages.

But hard times brought on by deficit spending, mismanagement of facilities, staff splits, exhaustion, and increasingly deteriorating community relations brought back radical coordinators in 1970. They changed the course topics from the popular psychodrama/encounter/crafts combination to political theory: History of Black Panthers, Marxist-Christian Dialog, Cuban Socialism, Cuba, American Monopoly Capitalism, Russian Revolution, Oppressed People, and Prisons. They supported unpopular (for their time) causes and aided Third World people. Two of their last official actions were to support two people who were fired from Stanford University: a black hospital worker and a tenured English professor, both of whom were active in off-campus revolutionary groups. Enrollments fell. In June 1971. only 67 people had registered for the summer term scheduled to commence in several days. The old leaders were tired and doing other things; they no longer wanted to make the effort to revitalize a dying institution. MFU closed the following month.

What are some of the things to be learned from the rise and fall of MFU?

Coalition politics didn't work. Some of the earliest free universities, including MFU, aimed to unify people who were dissatisfied with existing societal institutions. As envisioned, that group of people would include a coalition of alienated white intellectuals, ghetto poor, hippies, Third World people, blacks, and all others who felt oppressed. Alienation, they hoped, would be enough to bring these people together to learn about existing institutions, agree upon some aspects of better systems, and, finally, institute those shared visions. That's the theory.

What happened? The alienated white intellectuals who started the free university spoke to a few other alienated white intellectuals. The ghetto poor never came; they wanted to get into the system rather than to change it. What could they get from the free university? The hippies had a great time; they found others with similar ideas and left the free u for greener pastures: the hills of Palo Alto or the streets of Haight-Ashbury. Third World people saw money and presses, along with decisions made by alienated and pliable whites. Blacks and chicanos wanted resources; they

took over the magazine and changed it to *Venceremos* ("We Will Win"), the Midpeninsula Intercommunal News Service.

Who else came? Community people who were pretty satisfied with their lot entered. They created touchie-feelie-psychodrama-encounter-type groups and grooved on the experience. When the leaders tried to reinstitute radical policies and courses, they lost most of the free u's constituents.

People often come to the free university to find others with similar ideas; then they leave as an independent group with a narrower focus and continue to develop elsewhere. Activist-minded lawyers, women media proponents, and commune seekers are some who come initially to the free university, find like-minded people, and leave. Free u's have been more successful as a launch pad for such groups than as a home base.

Participatory democracy doesn't ensure involvement. The Constitution and By-Laws of MFU state:

> There shall be one class of members, and each member shall have equal status and rights with every other member. . . . The membership, acting as a body, shall have the following powers:
>
> (a) To make basic policy decisions
>
> (b) To elect (officers)
>
> (c) To remove all officers. Due process shall be followed in all removal proceedings
>
> (d) To approve, and, when necessary, to modify the budget
>
> (e) To modify or reverse any action of the coordination committee or Executive Committee.

Legally, MFU was planned to express the will of the majority of its members. But in practice seldom did more than 35 members take part in any decision-making meetings. MFU is typical of other free universities in this respect. Community members treat the free university as they do other community services: they see what's offered, shop around, take what looks good, and return if the quality is satisfactory and the cost right. Like movie goers, they want to sit, watch, and leave; that's relaxing. If they had to run the projector, the movie would probably not be shown.

EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE, SAN FRANCISCO STATE COLLEGE

Both FUB and MFU, while growing out of universities, operated independently of them. This is not the case with most (70 percent) of the 1972 free universities. The first model of an active, dependent, on campus free university is the Experimental College (EC) at San Francisco State College (now officially called California State University at San Francisco).

In contrast to the first two free universities, the EC proposed to extend

the academic curriculum by introducing student-initiated courses and workshops. According to the EC Catalog, fall 1966:

> The idea is that students ought to take responsibility for their education. The assertion is that you can start learning anywhere. as long as you really care about the problem you tackle and how well you tackle it. The method is one which asks you to learn how you learn. so you can set the highest conceptual standards of accomplishment for yourself. The assumption is that you are capable of making an open-ended contract with yourself to do some learning, and capable of playing a major role in evaluating your own performance. The claim is that if people, student, faculty and administrators work with each other in these ways, the finest quality education will occur.

The idea of an experimental college gained momentum with the victory of the radical student slate which won student association elections in the spring of 1963. The new officers were instrumental two years later in forming the EC. By assuming control of the student association, they later had the funds to support the EC. Between their election and their first term, other events occurred. Some students travelled to Mississippi for the 1964 summer. Others created an off-campus tutorial program. The Community Involvement Project sent students off campus to learn about local needs. Noncredit seminars were designed by students to get freshmen to think critically about their own education. If students could arrange seminars and get credit for off campus work, why couldn't they change their own curriculum? They still needed some mechanism so that their efforts would not result merely in new extracurricular programs.

At about the same time another development occurred. Two faculty members who had recently attended a Danforth Foundation workshop formed a group to see how they could get fresh ideas into the curriculum. In addition to faculty, the group included a student advisor and the EC originators. Subsequently, many departments adopted the "Special Studies Option" whereby faculty members could set up innovative courses by writing a description of their course and securing approval from the chairman of their department. This provided the students with the lever they needed. The Special Studies "loophole" allowed students to develop course syllabi, find a sympathetic faculty sponsor, and get the course approved for undergraduate credit. In this manner, EC courses could be taken for credit.

During the first semester (spring '66), 66 students got credit for EC courses. (Most of the 307 who enrolled did not seek credit.) There were seminars in Nonviolence in a Violent World, Astronauts of Inner Space, and Urban Action (taught by Jimmy Garrett, one of the veterans of the Mississippi Freedom Summer and later a leader of the black students who spearheaded the deposition of two SFSC presidents—one acting—and paved the way for S.I. Hayakawa). Paul Goodman was hired by the Associated Students to be a visiting professor and he also taught in the EC. An educa-

tion project included seminars on innovative teaching methods, a separate project of field work in innovative schools, and workshops in new educational techniques designed to foster creativity and individual growth in higher education (led by Frederick Perls, Yoga Kriyananda, William Shutz, Peter Marin, and Joel Fort). EC students also developed one of the first collegewide student evaluations of professors. One workshop course developed into a campus draft counseling and information center. The innovations introduced by the EC in 1965-66 were just beginning to turn up on campuses across the country at the start of the 70's.

During the following summer, a self-evaluation project was undertaken. Conflict surfaced between those wanting a "coherent political strategy for redefining the educational priorities of the regular college" and those who wanted educational innovation to be spontaneous and open to all.[6] (This is similar to the conflict experienced by MFU, only the latter was less university-directed.) The reform faction lost, opening the way for courses in Self-Awareness, Zen-Basketball, and Meta-Hamlet.

Enrollments expanded as drop-ins from the Haight-Ashbury district found out about the EC. Many people came not with the intention of serious learning but to get together for fun and sociability. This huge influx of people brought with it the administrative problems of simply getting people where they wanted to be. When the EC lost its strongest leader (Jim Nixon had been elected president of the Associated Students), and disagreement broke out over the purposes of the EC, the two year shift away from being an educational alternative within San Francisco State began. The EC became a playground for the bored and alienated students on campus. By 1968 it developed into an "institutional safety valve for the very college it had hoped to revolutionize."[7]

The EC had its greatest impact on San Francisco State in its earliest years, between the spring of 1965 and the summer of 1967. Some contended that what the students were trying to do was what the faculty should have been doing themselves:

> It would have been better if the faculty had created an experimental unit at the college as a place to try out new ideas, new ways of presenting material, new concepts for integrating rational, emotional and sensory experience. But the faculty did not take the leadership, so the students did.[8]

One year after its inception, 75 experimental courses were included in the

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[6] William Barlow and Peter Shapiro, *An End to Silence* (New York, 1971), p. 82.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 84.

[8] John Summerskill, *President Seven* (New York, 1971), p. 32.

undergraduate curriculum.[9] Even five years later, faculty members still at San Francisco State recalled that the EC encouraged them to try new things, one of which was the development of an off campus Freshman Year Program.

The impact of the EC was not limited to the San Francisco State College campus. It became a model for free universities around the nation. The Experimental College at San Diego State College, for example, was started by a student body president who admired Jim Nixon's creation. The Experimental College at the University of California, Davis, also modeled itself on the EC in San Francisco. But rather than focus on the within-the-university curricular changes, the Davis Experimental College has also tried to combine both the university and nonuniversity community. "Graduates" of the EC went other places and created similar within-the-walls counter institutions. The Center for Participant Education, a curriculum of student-initiated courses at the University of California, Berkeley, was one of these. Long after the EC at San Francisco State College went out of existence (1969), its impact was felt elsewhere.

[9] Terry Lunsford, "Educational Innovations In Response to Student Activism: Developments at Berkeley and San Francisco State," *Innovations in Higher Education*, Proceedings of a Conference Sponsored by the State University of New York (June 18-20, 1967).

Chapter four
Kinds of free U's; how they differ and how they don't

There are many ways to describe how free u's are alike and how they differ. Since each free university reflects the interests and needs of its constituents, one way might be to describe its target population (chicanos, park people, Aquarians, college students). Each free university also reflects the personality of its creator, so another way could be to describe its leader ("freak," scholastic, educational dropout). In this section, free u's are distinguished according to why they were created and how they function within their own communities. This kind of breakdown produces three groups.

Community center free u's are primarily places where people exchange ideas and are helped to act upon what concerns them. They are largely apolitical and service-oriented. In contrast to these non-ideological free u's, *radical free u's* can be characterized by their strong opposition to the establishment, the university, or some other particular policy or institution. The third kind, *academic free u's,* arise out of traditional universities and seek to work within those educational institutions to improve them. Whereas radical free u's set themselves apart from other institutions, academic free u's form integral units within the walls of larger institutions.

Free u's can and do change direction. Some start out with one focus and later shift to another; some fluctuate frequently between differing aims. Some free u's which start out with radical or academic aims later become service centers. Community center free u's may become radical or academic when the people coming to them want them to move in those directions.

COMMUNITY CENTER FREE U's

Community center free u's help people meet with others so that they may learn something new and initiate new community services. These free u's do not offer what they do as a substitute for experiences provided by schools or jobs; rather, they supplement and augment an individual's self-knowledge and a community's services.

When such free u's develop at smaller schools, they usually fit in with other academic and nonacademic activities. The free u students are often

active in other areas of campus life such as community service projects, clubs, theater groups, fraternities, and athletics. The curricula of these free u's include research projects into university and community problems, black-white encounters, and courses in the academic mode.

Community center free u's at larger universities are usually connected with the alternate culture. They stimulate local food cooperatives, build domes, humanize the environment, work with media, are heavily into the crafts, and plan meetings between university and nonuniversity groups.

The free u's in the late 60's were predominantly campus-based, integrated operations. During the 70's, many are becoming more community involved. Frequently this results in the on-campus free university severing financial and organizational ties with the university and moving off campus.

Off-campus community center free u's use the local area and its resources (schools, museums, parks, businesses, libraries, bookstores, municipal offices, churches) as their campus. They are more likely, therefore, to reflect community characteristics. Students and teachers are more diversified than those of campus free u's. The organization of these free u's is more business-like. Sometimes, the free u even incorporates as a nonprofit, tax-exempt organization supported by donations and tuition fees (of less than $15).

RADICAL FREE U's

All free universities arise out of a sense of need. Radical free u's arise from the need—real or felt—for changes in social, political and educational institutions. They represent a coalition of radical community people. A typical statement of purpose of these free u's is that of the Free University of Palo Alto (1966):

> The American educational establishment has proved incapable of meeting the needs of our society. The students are not encouraged to think, nor are they afforded meaningful training to help them understand the critical issues confronting mankind today. Bound to the existing power structure and handicapped by modes of thought fostered by big business, by the military establishment, by consensus politics, and by the mass media, it is unable to consider freely and objectively the cultural, economic and political forces so rapidly transforming the modern world. The present educational system, in fact, defends the status quo, perpetuating its evils and perils. The system is incapable of reform; it is no longer receptive to meaningful change. A revolution in American education is required to meet today's needs, and a new type of university—a free university—must provide the impetus for change.

Topics neglected by the traditional university are highlighted by the radical free u; others given full attention by the university are ignored. Community and radical politics, affective learning, Third World and women's studies, gay liberation, crafts and skills courses compose the cur-

riculum of these free u's. Passion, immediacy, and concreteness replace science, technology, and intellect. Radical free u's initiate "free presses," support unpopular ideas, and lobby for unpopular causes. Activism and political extremism are cherished rather than neutrality or detachment. Physical activity seems more important than mental development. Often, alienated students who have been active in campus protests originate these free u's. In addition to being centers for different kinds of learning, they serve as communications and mobilization offices for people involved in actions critical of the university and the dominant institutions in the community.

By their extreme political stance, radical free u's bring together alienated, often isolated, people. This nuclear group seeks to strike a responsive chord and attract a much wider following. But the growth of these free u's is unpredictable for two reasons.

First, surrounding communities are often uninterested in learning about political theory, foreign policy or revolutionary politics. Community people usually want courses in musical instruction, languages, and sensitivity. Courses intended to broaden the community's political awareness generally go unattended. If the founders insist on maintaining their ideological focus to the exclusion of more popular subjects, the free u does not survive long because of lack of interest.

Second, courses in radical politics, off-campus field work, independent study, interdisciplinary and problem programs often are adopted and made available by other institutions to the same community that many of these free u's service. Although free u's differ from traditional u's in their treatment of these subjects, the differences may not be so great. Many people interpret this kind of influence as a signal of the success of the free u. Others think that the imitation of free u courses and techniques represents only administrative tinkering designed to appease students rather than to make significant changes.

Some Start Suddenly: Steamvalves

Some radical free u's are not the product of deliberate, prolonged efforts, but arise suddenly in reaction to national events or unpopular decisions by campus administrators. In the immediate aftermath of the May 1970 invasion of Cambodia and the killing of students at Kent State University, several free universities arose.

Amistad (meaning "friendship") developed out of the student strike at the University of New Mexico. The National Guard had been called onto the campus, and violence seemed imminent. At first, only two routes out of the impasse seemed possible: retreat or attack. Then an idea circulated through the throng; no one quite knows how or why. The idea was to

create a new university to "discuss, study and act upon those problems that normally are not covered in the University curriculum."[1] The new university would continue confrontation with the issues while averting bloodshed. Overnight, ideas and topics developed into courses.. At the end of the first day of registration, 780 people enrolled in 43 courses. After two days, Amistad's enrollment was 1,500, or 10 percent of the university.

Free universities helped avert disaster at other universities too. Usually, situations were similar: students were frustrated and angry; the campus was tense; and destruction seemed about to occur. There was little agreement on goals. Some means was required by which all members of the university community (students, faculty, administrators, staff) could channel their emotions into acceptable (and sometimes constructive) outlets. These free u's took immediate pressure off the university and enabled it to resume normal operations.

But they served as more than steam valves. New mechanisms for starting innovative courses, novel freshman-year programs, problem-centered interdisciplinary curricula, seminars utilizing community people as resources, de-elitising of honors programs, and less-rigid grading options are some of the results of these sudden free u's.

Usually, though, these suddenly created free u's do not last long. Frequently, they operate only for the remainder of the academic term during which they were born. Six months after Amistad started, its coordinator wrote (November 1970): "We have at this point plummeted from the heights and now sit in the basement. . . . Right now we are regrouping forces for an all-out attack to rejuvenate education."

The forces never came together. Amistad still struggles, but participation is a small fraction of what it was. After the initial impact, these sudden free u's do not have the urgency, enrollments, or clarity of purpose to thrive.

Some Fall Into It: Accidents

Some free u's don't really plan to focus on issues of power distribution; it just happens to them. Usually, it's the result of circumstance: a snoopy reporter who needs a juicy story for the day, a trustee or legislator out to stir up an issue to please hometown constituents, a watchdog citizen who writes a letter to the editor of the local paper. Free universities can offer whatever course they want without interference most of the time. In 1971, free u's advertised courses in "Revolutionary Organization," "Study of How to Organize a Revolution," "The Art of Guerrilla Warfare for Fun and Profit," "Guerrilla Warfare: Arms Manufacturing and Tactics." No

[1] *Amistad*. Course Catalog. May, 1970.

one seemed very concerned about these courses. But when the Center for Participant Education (CPE) at Florida State University offered "How to Make a Revolution in the U.S.A." and "The Homosexual in Society," a lot of people got upset.

During the spring semester of 1971, CPE offered a smorgasbord of 49 noncredit courses which included Astrology, Photojournalism, Ideologies of the Black Movement, and Science Fiction Literature. But "How to Make a Revolution in the U.S.A." and "The Homosexual and Society" overshadowed all else that semester.

First, the local newspaper gossip column picked up the course "How to Make a Revolution in the U.S.A." and asked how a radical (Jack Lieberman) could be allowed to teach Communism and use taxpayers' money to do it. Actually, the course had already been suspended because of lack of interest, but now the commotion brought it back to life. After much investigation and the attendance of state senators at one session of the class, a Florida State Senate committee asked for the abolition of the whole free u because of this one course. The Board of Regents called for an inquiry. In response, the president of Florida State University issued a lengthy report on the Center for Participant Education dated March 29, 1971. In it, he concluded:

> In a time of increased criticism of academic programs and the failure of universities to be innovative, CPE is a novel and fresh approach to academic reform. . . . Their methods may not always be without error, but the students are sincere and their attempts frequently result in progress for the university.[2]

In the body of the report, he analysed the Lieberman case:

> The only difference between the proposed Lieberman discussion group and any other discussion group on the campus is that the proposed topic for discussion by the Lieberman discussion group is controversial, as is the personality of the discussion leader. . . . University intervention in the activities of the CPE must be predicated only upon the clear determination that the substantive content of a particular discussion violates the law or is otherwise outside the protection of the First Amendment, for only within such a broad perspective can meaningful consideration be given to the discussion led by Jack Lieberman[3] . . . . If we recognize the guidelines of the case law, statutory law, and the guidelines of our internal regulations, *a fortiori*, we can find no justifiable reason to take action at this time to censor the Lieberman group's or any other group's attempt to exercise its right of expression under the First Amendment.[4]

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[2] Stanley Marshall. *The Center for Participant Education: A Student Activity at Florida State University* (unpublished report, Florida State University, March 29, 1971), p. 14.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 10.

Before both the Senate committee and the Board of Regents, President Marshall consistently upheld the right of students to meet and to discuss whatever subject they pleased as long as it was consistent with state and federal laws.

Results for the Students. Despite his lengthy overt defense, new guidelines developed in response to these pressures. These guidelines, which were worked out during the summer of 1971, stated that CPE course content and instructors' qualifications must be reviewed by the CPE Board and allow for a vice-presidential veto. The following September (1971), the CPE director was informed by the vice-president of the University that CPE courses could not be held until they were reviewed by him. After the first week of FSU classes passed and no word of approval came down, the CPE board met and voted not to wait for approval any longer. The next day, CPE was informed that all courses could be offered except two: "How To Make A Revolution in U.S.A." and "The Homosexual in Society." Lieberman was suspended from the university for allegedly holding his courses during the suspension period. Shortly thereafter, he was cleared of all charges by the Honor Court and the campus Supreme Court only to be dismissed from the university by President Marshall. Leaders voted to disband the student government, but the student body overruled their vote in an all-university referendum.

Administrative Guidelines. Guidelines for noncredit discussion groups were adopted by the Board of Regents on December 18, 1971, for *all* Florida State colleges and universities. They specified that the president must implement mandatory guidelines for review and approval of subsidized noncredit discussion groups. These guidelines covered discussion group titles, general content and teaching methods, specific teaching methods, and discussion leader teaching competence. There was a provision in the guidelines that the title of each subsidized noncredit discussion group should accurately reflect the content of the matters discussed in each group. The guidelines also included a section stating:

> Should such a proposed non-credit discussion group topic appear to offend any one enumerated aim, such proposed non-credit discussion topic shall be carefully reviewed by the university to determine whether such a proposed non-credit discussion topic constitutes a legal and unobjectionable expenditure of public funds, and a legal and unobjectionable use of public property or facilities.[5]

The use of the vague term "unobjectionable" leaves tremendous leeway for interpretation.

Another section of the guidelines states that no discussion group may be

[5] "Proposed Guidelines for Implementing Policy on Non-Credit Discussion Groups" (unpublished, November 19, 1971), adopted by the Board of Regents later that year.

sponsored by, or serve as an instrument for meetings of, a de facto group or an organization that is not recognized by the university or that "might not" be otherwise entitled to use university property or facilities. This provision was included because it was alleged that the CPE course "The Homosexual and Society" was an indirect way to allow the Gay Liberation Front to use university facilities.

Results for the Free U. The first reaction of the free u was to accept the restrictions grudgingly; the second was to talk about moving off campus into the campus ministries; and the third (most recent) has been to continue pushing for educational and institutional reform. In the immediate aftermath of this incident, the free u stayed away from educational issues because it had to spend so much time on the chief one of saving itself. It survived, but its organizers spent the year in defenses, crises, hearings, meetings, resignations, and explanations. Controversy forced the free u to redirect energies away from ongoing growth processes into postures of self-defense. For a while, a state of siege set in. The battle against regents, legislators, and the public was waged by both students and administrators as unwilling, wary allies. When it was all over, the free u had won its fight for survival, but it had lost its energy and vitality. The main issue, freedom of speech, was lost in the long legal hassles. When the final compromises were worked out (the guidelines), they turned out to be more restricting to campus groups than before the issue was raised.

Some people counter that such results are insignificant. The drama has been successful, they believe, because it has "raised the consciousness" of college students. What was first a tragedy for academic freedom of the university becomes an educational advantage for the learning community of students, faculty, and administrators. In the process students learn that the ogres of academic freedom are not only administrators, who must enforce, but regents, legislators, and the public.

According to this theory, the strongest free university is the one that highlights political reality best. The greater the commotion (the more dismissals, hearings, resignations, and reactions), the more effective the free university. The greatest impact that the free university could have on an institution is to polarize it. If after that time the free university dies, it has served its need. It has changed the lives and the thinking of many more people than it could ever have done if it had not raised key issues. It leaves behind a community which is more politically astute.

If the goal of the free u is politicization of the larger surrounding community, the cost may be its life along with any other services it provides. On the other hand, if those services overshadow consciousness raising goals,

some discretion in the choice of course titles (radical yes, revolutionary no) should be considered seriously.

My purpose here is not to judge which route to take, for it clearly depends on the aims of the people involved and the environment in which the free u is set. This brief look at the history of a free u that became politicized because of revolutionary course titles may help other free u's chart goals with a clearer idea of what it could cost to reach them.

ACADEMIC FREE U's

The most difficult free u to sustain is the one which locates on the campus and tries to do better what the university is not doing so well. Such free u's hypothesize that: 1) students can and should take responsibility for their own education; and 2) when they do, better learning occurs.

Even after the turmoil and changes of the 60's, these views are not overwhelmingly supported; getting them into practice means working hard to overcome the hesitations of several groups. Faculty especially need to be convinced, because it is they who traditionally have had responsibility for a student's education. Also, most students don't believe that they can or should play a decisive role in their own education. Many think that their role is to receive the learning that others have distilled for them. As a result, academic free u's usually adopt broad enough programs so that some people embrace parts without necessarily endorsing the whole thing. For example, the three aims of the Experimental College at California State University at Fullerton are:

> 1) to provide educational experiences which cannot be offered, or are presently not being offered, within the present structures . . .; 2) to serve as a laboratory in which new educational concepts may be tested—concepts which can then be applied to both [the larger college and the free university]; 3) to provide students with a place in which to test, exercise, and increase their own autonomy—to help students learn how to educate themselves.

Academic free u's often develop as a result of a student-faculty committee or as a plank in the platform of a reform candidate for student body president. They are started by people who seek quality education, but are disappointed with what they've found. Their goal is neither radical nor wild-eyed. They want to improve traditional methods of educating people to live better.

Within the academic free u there are usually courses which could be considered experimental or laboratory courses for the university. Black studies is one example of a course which was, at first, not offered in most colleges. The free u picked it up, showed its academic and financial feasibility, and later dropped the topic when academic departments included it.

Academic free u's also specialize in the mechanics of how to get credit

for "doing your own thing." Independent study options become the means by which credit is gained for free u courses. People involved in academic free u's have also pressed for department- and college-wide provisions for getting experimental courses rapidly approved. With such an opportunity, faculty and students with a new and good idea can implement it before it loses its importance and immediacy. Academic free u's plan workshops on educational reform, arrange discussion groups on administrator-faculty-student issues, and form study groups to develop alternatives to normal university procedures (grades, requirements).

But early in their development, academic free u's run into the same kind of personality crises experienced by radical free u's. Academic free u's find that people are not as interested as the originators had hoped in working hard for curricular changes. Students seem reluctant to assume responsibility for their own learning. They show more interest in non-academic courses such as candlemaking, natural childbirth, and tarot. When this happens, priorities for educational reform take the rumble seat. The academic free u changes from a vehicle for educational reform to a clearinghouse for diverse, usually nonacademic topics. Reform-minded directors subtly lose their leadership.

This is not irreversible, however. Sometimes new leaders are elected who assume control of the free u; they then form it into their own image. For example, the Center for Participant Education (Florida State University) formed when Chuck Sherman, who was campaigning for student body president, promised that if elected there would be a student-initiated center for educational reform on the campus. After he got elected, CPE started. The first year, CPE was oriented primarily toward an even mix of academic and nonacademic courses. The next year new student officers were elected and the free u became more like its new leaders: academically disinterested, with a heavier concentration of courses in individual and psychic awareness. Now (1972-73), new organizers have directed CPE back toward educational and institutional changes. Like many free u's, CPE reflects the concerns of its current leadership.

Overall, however, free u's that try to focus on educational reform find that difficult because of the influx of many other things that people would like to do but cannot do within the curriculum.

Chapter five
teaching-learning styles

TEACHERS

Anyone may organize and teach a free u course. I have attended a class taught by a 15-year-old high school student and another arranged by a retired botanist. Life style and politics are irrelevant. Students, professionals, freaks, super straights, radicals and reactionaries teach free u courses. One person initiated contact by addressing a letter to a free u coordinator that said:

> I read about the "Free U" in The Beacon and approve of the idea.
>
> I am a semi-retired food service consultant who last summer relocated to Gatlinburg, where I do some writing. . . .
>
> I would be able and willing to teach FOOD SERVICE MANAGEMENT or ADMINISTRATION (or something like it), provided there is enough interest.
>
> If you want to pursue this, my phone number (in Gatlinburg) is 436-7644.
>
> Good Luck (it may not work)!

Sometimes people employed in regular schools teach courses in the free u. A California junior college English teacher leads "Community Dialog: Police and Penitentiaries," in which community members meet with law enforcement people and Soledad prisoners. A high school principal arranges a symposium in communications. A German instructor teaches German. The chairman of a university Environmental Studies Program leads informal discussions in ecology. An instructor who was dismissed from one university for smoking in class and failing to keep regular office hours teaches "Shakespeare" and "Egyptian Hieroglyphics."

Other courses are taught by full-time working people who do not necessarily have the credentials to be college instructors. A magazine editor conducts a course in "Writing and Editing for Magazines." A legal aid attorney organizes seminars on constitutional rights. His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada lectures on the *Bhagavad Gita.* An organic farmers' collective coordinates a group that investigates and publishes information on organic farms. Photography is often taught by professional photographers. A group in "New Directions After Thirty"

is taught by someone who changed direction after that age and founded/edited *Black Bart Brigade*, a magazine devoted to middle-age change. An ordained minister in the Pentecostal Assembly of God teaches "In Search of a Black Theology." "Wooden Ship Model Building" is taught by a high school graduate who earns his living whittling ships. A foreman in the local repair garage instructs students in "Preventive Automobile Maintenance." A professional game designer with eight games on the market teaches "Game Designing."

Other courses are taught by people who have cultivated a specialty on their own. "Scrabble" is taught by someone known to her friends as a "scrabble freak extraordinaire." A student who claims to have consumed over 3,000 bowls of rice offers to teach Mandarin Chinese. The retired chapter president of a garden club directs sessions in organic gardening. And "Practical Psychology" is taught by a carpenter.

The image people have of the free university largely determines who approaches it. Campus bound free u's involve primarily campus-affiliated people. If these free u's are chiefly academic institutions, some of their instructors are highly qualified professors. Who teaches also depends on the aims of the free u. If it is a community center free u, there is usually a wide range of people. Academic free u's, which aim to reform the educational structures of the college, sometimes do not attract people without academic interests. And radical free u's sometimes frighten off apolitical people. The teachers in free u's also tend to reflect the personality of the coordinator(s). If the coordinator is a young, hippie-looking person, for example, it is usually harder to involve the more traditional community members.

Another problem in getting a "natural" teacher to teach in the free university is that persons who have never been employed as teachers find it difficult to conceive of themselves in that role. A businessman often doesn't stop to think that he might make a good teacher. The plumber who didn't complete high school may know that he's a good plumber, but any kind of teaching has an aura of advanced formal education about it. Some jump at the chance to teach something they know; others, particularly local craftsmen and laborers, need to be persuaded that there are people who could learn a lot from them. These people may often be attracted to teaching in free u's because they find support there when other institutions have not supported them in that way before.

One person I met who fits this description is a carpenter who's a bit eccentric, a high school dropout, yoga devotee, and the father of three children. He says he's wanted to teach for a long time but has been handicapped by his skimpy academic background. The free u offered him the opportunity to share his insights and skills with others. Now he teaches

two courses and is one of the three directors of a free university. Out of his contacts with some free u people and surrounding academic community members, he has been accepted in a University Without Walls program to work with the free university while picking up the academic credentials he wants. The free u has allowed him to express himself in ways he never before had a chance to.

Free u teaching often consists of a series of individual steps to more knowledge rather than filling in huge gaps between the expert and the student. When a learner reaches the level of the interim teacher, both seek another more knowledgeable resource to increase their understanding. Unlike traditional colleges and universities, those people who are the most knowledgeable in a subject need not teach it to those who are the least knowledgeable.

HOW TEACHERS ARE EVALUATED

Free u's require no teaching credentials. The only criterion to teach a course is getting students. Usually, about three out of four courses offered in free u brochures get started.

With no criteria, how do free u's guard against bad teaching? Jim Kiefer, who teaches at the Washington Area Free University, says:

> If you offer a Spanish course and the people who come find that they are not learning Spanish, they will probably not come back next week. . . On the other hand there may be teachers who manage to impress their students for quite a while before anyone realizes that the lecturer is talking utter nonsense. This, I think, is not unfortunate; an important part of education is learning to recognize nonsense for yourself. If you are attending a class where the professor is, in your judgment, putting something on the class, you can always try to set things straight. . . . If he is evasive or simply shuts you up, the class can draw its own conclusions. It is his classroom, and he has the right to order you out, but the class has the right to follow you out and ask you to organize a class of your own on the subject. Of course, the class may find his obviously worthless arguments better than your obviously cogent ones. That is their misfortune—and their business.[1]

Students know when teachers are bad. If the professor stands in front of them reading outdated material from yellowed course notes, the students know it. In a skills class, if a teacher is unprepared or does things wrong, students know it. If the teacher refuses to answer a question, disallows interaction, or fails to meet the needs of the students, the students know it. They can walk out and find another instructor, or they can sit and waste their time.

Instant evaluation of teachers is the rule in the free university rather than

[1] Jim Kiefer, "What is WAFU?" *WAFU Tin Drum* (Washington, D. C., March 1970), p. 21.

the exception. If an instructor starts out the first week with 20 students and 2 return for the second session, something is wrong. That's instant feedback. If it's a bad class, people often say so try to change it, or walk out. If people are learning, they seek to continue the teaching-learning interaction.

TEACHING STYLES

The visitor to free u classes will find many styles of teaching. Some teachers use the standard college-lecture approach, but most do not. Most teach by demonstration, group projects, and experiential learning. Many classes start out with a series of demonstrations and end up with a free exchange of ideas. Free u classes are less bound by time and space than traditional university classes. Classes usually begin about 15 minutes after the time printed in the brochure; they end when the group decides to break up.

Demonstrations

The most popular teaching style is the demonstration of a particular skill or craft. After an initial demonstration, the teacher works with each student until the skill is learned.

There are variations, of course. Some workshops encourage students to bring in their own projects, such as an emerging model ship or an unfinished canvas. In other cases, classes are not held at all. Interested community persons who want to learn how to paint or how to build a staircase simply contact the instructor and arrange a time for the instructor to show them how to set up their work spaces and what tools are needed. The teacher and student apprentice work together until the skill is mastered.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is similar to the field-work projects, laboratory courses, and community involvement projects in colleges and universities. The difference, however, is that free u's incorporate experiential learning at the beginning of each course so that the student will be motivated first by direct involvement. Later the student can go on to learn more about the subject from the secondary resources. More specifically, there's no better way to start learning about witchcraft than to visit a coven.

Lectures (of a Homey Sort)

Contrary to the expectations and hopes of many people, free u teachers do lecture, although their lectures might better be characterized as demonstrations, reminiscences, or discussions. Lectures are laced with many personal examples. The subjects are not academic in the theoretical sense, but very intimate matters:

You can go up to your plant and pinch off a leaf and so help me Hannah, it'll flinch. Let a total stranger pinch off a leaf and the needle won't react. Plants have to respond to me because I do it with the sincerest of love.

—Organic gardening instructor

Free u lectures also tend to be briefer than university lectures. They include a lot of examples for students to relate to (*"The Moon Sign Book* is as essential to planting as the level is to the carpenter"). The teacher's notes, if any, are usually written on one page of lined, folded paper. Some students take notes, but most do not. Instructors usually tell students where they can review what's been said in order that the students don't lose the trend of thought while they are scribbling notes.

The primary difference between free u and regular university lectures is that instructors talk with, rather than at, their students. The style is more like that of a living room. You teach a friend how to do something and tell why you are interested, what's happened to you as a result of it, and what the friend might find in it that you've found. After half-hour lectures of this sort a discussion usually gets started—often taking the format of questions and answers.

Q. I don't have any luck with rhubarb. What am I doing wrong?

A. You're planting it too deep.

The lecture format, though usually less formal that what you find at traditional u's, is probably second only to demonstrations in popularity as a free u teaching technique.

Group Dynamics for Synergistic Developments

This cumbersome mouthful of words applies to courses in which individual awareness and affective learning are stimulated through intense personal interaction. Most of these courses have a theme: human liberation, black-white encounter, poetry or divorce workshops, leadership training, group gaming. Classes are called "sessions" or "workshops," and teachers are "leaders," "organizers," or "catalysts." The leader's function is to help the group to carry out goals usually set by the participants. Groups are often closed to outside observers so that the privacy and confidence of group members may be maintained.

EVALUATING LEARNING

Most learning evaluation in free u's takes place immediately. First comes the demonstration, then students imitate. Those who do not do it right are helped immediately. In this way, students do not lose the gist of the course because of a simple misunderstanding in the early phases.

Sometimes even tests are used. One teacher explains why:

> Students are pretty lazy about actual out-and-out memorization. As it was necessary at future meetings to have memory recall, a test seemed to be the answer. When you deal with a group of 40, it is hard to know where each one stands in the process and a test was the easiest way of class evaluation—and was not intended as individual evaluation.
>
> —Teacher of Beginning Astrology, Communiversity, Missouri

But tests and quizzes are rare, and even when they are used the approach differs from that of most university courses. Many university teachers *say* that tests are supposed to help instructors know how to gear the course. But every student knows that whether or not that is true, tests function to help the teacher reward and punish individual students. Regular university teachers usually schedule tests after long intervals (6 to 16 weeks). By that time, if it becomes clear that a student misunderstood something in the first couple lessons he may be hopelessly behind. Tests are used in free u's to indicate how well the instructor communicates. If students don't understand something about the last lesson, class time is taken to help them.

Normative evaluation is less important in free u's than in other places because participants set their own goals. For example, some students enroll in the auto mechanics course to learn to change a tire, others to learn to tune the car, and still others to learn how to diagnose all its ills. Since involvement is solely personal, so is evaluation.

OTHER THINGS (MEETING PLACES, SEATING ARRANGEMENTS, ETC.)

In general, free u classes are small, they don't use desks, and seating arrangements are circular or haphazard. The setting is relaxed and comfortable. Students get up, walk around to stretch, lie on the floor, bring children and dogs. (My own dog was never refused entry.) In free u classes, people gravitate to their own comfortable space.

Classes meet wherever it is convenient or appropriate. A group on housebuilding met in a church-owned, partly finished basement room and visited local construction sites. A logic class met in a classroom with seats bolted to the floor and a blackboard at the front of the room. Egyptian Hieroglyphics met in the instructor's living room among stacks of magazines and books. Parapsychology, a large course involving over 100 people, met in the basement of the student center. Future mechanics gathered in a local garage. Educational reformers met in the nursery school. Poets met in the park. Classes usually meet in places where students can learn not only how to do something, but what it's like to do it.

Seating arrangements are usually informal, but they range from none to lecture hall rows. Most classes which use texts and have discussions meet around large tables, seminar style. If students are learning how to repair

a car engine, they gather around the three frontal sides of the car. If they are learning how to make candles or play the guitar, students usually sit on chairs or on the floor in a circle so all can see the demonstration best and then practice it on their own. Only in large lectures are chairs arranged in rows; usually even then, movable chairs are rearranged into concentric semicircles.

Just as free u's avoid impersonal seating arrangements, so it is with course materials. Visual aids are simple and brief, often just dittoes. A pottery instructor distributes dittoed lists of definitions the first week. A photography instructor hands out brief instructions on how to develop film and print pictures. Television, films, projectors, amplifying equipment, and special lighting are seldom used by free u teachers. Only with very large groups do instructors resort to microphones.

Chapter Six
age and numbers

In 1971, there were approximately 150 free universities. Their average age (spring 1972) is 2.83 years. The idea for the oldest active free university, the Free University of Berkeley, emerged in December 1964; the school itself opened in early 1965. Among the youngest free u's are Southwestern Illinois Learning Cooperative, Chico Learning Exchange (January 1972), and Xenogenesis, California (April 1972). No doubt others will have come into being by the time this report is published. The age of a free u appears to have little relationship to enrollment, politics, or curriculum. For with changing situations, changing personnel, changing interests, and changing climates, the free university renews itself each year or dies.

And some of them die quite suddenly. For instance, Communiversity, a large Boston free university that operated for several years, lined up 40 instructors for the fall, and then locked its offices and didn't answer phones. It appears that some organizers had left town, and the others did not have the time to devote to Communiversity. So it didn't continue. Here was a large, active, ongoing free university and it stopped. Other free u's start and their first three weeks have more participation, impact, and vitality than ever again. Most though are not so explosive in their burst of beginning or suddenness of closing. Most start again with each turnover in leadership. They are vulnerable to the touch of any or every community person; they are reflective more than they are developmental. They are like the mercury in thermometers which registers the slightest change in surrounding conditions.

Some free u's have grown and developed. For example, the University for Man (Kansas) first viewed itself as the provider of extra courses for college students; later, it broadened its focus to become a center for alternate learning for the whole community. But this growth is rather unusual. Every few months, it is common for a free u to be in crisis, reassessing purposes, changing personnel and direction--in essence, starting again.

How many free universities have sprouted and disappeared since the first free u opened eight years ago is unknown. Some last only six months. The causes of free u deaths are as varied as the causes of birth. When I

wrote in 1970 to the free universities listed in Blair Hamilton's directory,[1] sample responses were:

> Our Free University is not operating this semester. . . . The Free University movement depends on student leadership which may be strong one semester and weak another.
>
> —DePauw University
> Greencastle, Indiana

> Regretfully the program has fallen into 'limbo.' . . . Educational reform here at Metropolitan State College, i.e., Free University-type, is not designed to fit our particular students, since we're located in the core city area and are supposed to be an urban-oriented college. Perhaps more of a problem is that over 90% of our student body works either full or part-time and our average student body age is 27.
>
> —Metropolitan State College
> Denver, Colorado

> The program is moribund because of lack of interest. The more effective leaders of the program two years ago are no longer on campus and certain modifications have been made in the standard curriculum. Most of the efforts for educational reform a being made through student and faculty governing groups.
>
> —Wisconsin State University
> Eau Claire, Wisconsin

> We no longer have a free university. All these programs have been absorbed in our January Program.
>
> —Bethany College
> Bethany, West Virginia

The actual number of free universities, past and present, is probably much greater than could be reflected by surveys. The low visibility of free u's makes them difficult to locate. Several times I asked college administrators whether there was a free university nearby and was told no. Later, I would go to the student association office, look on the bulletin board outside the dean's office, or visit the corner store and find there was an active free university on campus or in town.

A WORD ABOUT THE FREE U MOVEMENT

Many people try to tie in free u's with "the movement." That connection is, I think, misleading.

> Despite the appearance of a free school "movement," there may not be one at all. What may be closer to the truth is that some persons interested in alternative lifestyle, and others interested in political change, are both, at the moment, experimenting with free schools as a way of bringing about change — and that

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[1] Blair Hamilton, *Free Universities and Experimental Colleges* (Yellow Springs, 1968).

the allegiances on both sides are not to new kinds of schooling, but merely to *kinds of change.*[2]

Free u's started out with the movement in radical politics, but they did not remain with it long. As soon as activists saw how difficult effecting changes in higher education would be, they moved away from creating models of "free learning" within traditional institutions. But the departure of political activists did not stop free u's from continuing to sprout around the nation. Word of mouth accounted for their continued proliferation.

On August 22, 1971, Fred Hechinger wrote an article in *The New York Times* entitled: "Free Universities: No Grades, No Exams—And Now, No Schools." Probably most readers glanced only at the headline and stored away that little tidbit of information: free universities are dead. This headline had a very great impact on free u's themselves. What happens to someone with an idea who is told that the idea doesn't work? *The New York Times'* funeral notice acts in some ways like a self-fulfilling prophesy.

Fortunately, enough free u people have an adequate concept of their own existence and usefulness in a community to know that they are more than ghosts. That there are 50 percent more free u's in 1971 than there were in 1968 seems to verify their feeling of the life of the free u's.

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[2] Peter Marin, quoted in the *New Schools Exchange Newsletter*, No. 79, May 31, 1972, p. 3.

Chapter Seven
Location

Free u's are not scattered haphazardly across the nation. Most are situated right on the campuses of big multiversities. Independent free u's are likely to be in large towns that have a rich mosaic of subcultures. Free u's gravitate to areas where there are other alternate-culture phenomena. Their neighborhoods are friendly, informal, "chatty," young people's places.

REGIONAL LOCATION

In 1972, the North Central region accounts for more free u's than any other region, one-quarter of the total. Three regions (West, South, Middle States) have comparable numbers of free universities. New England has fewer than these regions and the Northwest has the fewest free u's.

Table 1. Number of free u's in each region[1]

	1971-72		1967-68	
	N	%	N	%
West	24	21	17	22
Northwest	2	2	4	5
North Central	29	25	29	38
South	23	20	8	11
Middle States	21	19	13	17
New England	12	11	4	6
Canada	3	2	1	1

In the earliest years, California, home of the first free university, dominated the scene. More free universities were created there than anywhere else. Then, in the middle years, California created about the same number of free u's but other regions began to catch up by creating more. During the past four years, the South and New England have tripled their free u's. The North Central region created the same number as it had in 1967-68 and the Northwest created less. Compared to 1967-68, there are now 50 percent more free universities and they are more evenly distributed around the nation.

[1] Figures for 1971-72 are my own; those for 1967-68 are from Hamilton, *op. cit.*

CAMPUS FREE U's

Seven out of ten free universities locate on college campuses. This in itself indicates several things about free u's. First, most free u's are not, strictly speaking, "outside the system." They service, primarily, people who already have access to higher education. Second, while some free u's see themselves as "counter institutions," their freedom is granted by the parent institution. A tension usually exists between the university and the free university which tests the limits of each. This does not mean that it is the free u's which are always trying to stretch the limits. Sometimes the pressure to reach out further comes from the regular university, which encourages the free u to become more active and experimental. The ability of a large university to incorporate and encourage dissent and criticism in its midst is one of the great self-preservation mechanisms that universities have. It is also one of the best stumbling blocks to people who expect to change institutions significantly, for there is the likelihood that new ideas will be adopted to satisfy the immediate needs of a few who are discontented, isolating them and removing the generalized pressure for change in the rest of the institution. Third, many colleges and universities are seeking to involve more nontraditional people in their programs. The free u's can be viewed, from this standpoint, as an outreach project to involve such people.

Campus Size. Free u's are most likely to be at large universities. There are no free u's at the smallest colleges (under 1,000 students); over half of the on-campus free universities are at large multiversities (over 12,000 students). These institutions account for only 2 percent of the total

Table 2. Size of the institutions at which free u's are located

Enrollment	*Free U's (Percent)*
Less than 1,000	0
1,000- 4,999	17
5,000-11,999	27
12,000+	56

number of institutions of higher education.[2] Bigger schools are more likely to have a free university.

Highest Degree Level. Most campus free universities, about 70 percent, are located at institutions that grant the Ph.D. degree. Although doctorate granting institutions account for only 6 percent of the total number of institutions of higher education, free u's are more than twice as likely to

[2] Carnegie Commission Staff, *New Students and New Places* (New York, 1971) and U.S.O.E. data.

be at these institutions as at any other. Conversely, while over half of the total number of institutions of higher education are less than four-year schools, only two free universities are at such schools.

Table 3. Highest level of degree granted at institutions where free u's are located

Degree Level	*Free U's (Percent)*
Doctorate	70
Baccalaureate+	24
Two-year and specialized degree	6

Control. Most free universities are at publicly controlled institutions. In 1971, 43 percent of all colleges and universities were public. But two out of three campus-based free u's (66 percent) were located at public institutions.

Region. There are more university-connected free u's in the North Central region (32 percent) than in any other. There are also more institutions of higher education in that region than in any other. The southern states house 27 percent of all colleges and universities; they include only 18 percent of the free universities. The western states have the same *number* of free universities as the South, but they account for less than 10 percent of all colleges and universities. Per institution, free u's are more likely in the West than in the South. This regional difference conforms, on the surface, with the stereotype that the South is the slowest region to adopt new ideas, particularly when those ideas relate to the alternate or counter culture. But there are other explanations.

The presence or absence of a free u on a compus is more closely related to the size of the institution than to any other factor. Ph.D. institutions are more likely to have free u's because they are large multiversities. Public institutions predominate for the same reason. The average enrollment of the colleges and universities where free u's are located is almost 10,000 students. There are not many private schools with such high enrollments.

Even regional differences can be explained to a great extent by the number of very large institutions in some regions. For example, only 17 percent of the institutions of higher education in the South enroll over 5,000 students while 42 percent of those in the West do. With 83 percent of the free universities at the largest institutions of higher education, it is quite natural that the South would have fewer free u's than the West. However, some regional differences persist: when population differences are controlled, New England, with a percentage of large institutions equal to that of the South, has twice as many free u's.

That free u's tend to be located at large institutions is not surprising. National surveys have consistently found that protest activity is more common at large schools than at small, and free u's—directly or indirectly—are an expression of protest. In a more positive sense, they utilize creative energies when other openings are not available.

INDEPENDENT FREE U's

Just as free u's at colleges and universities are most likely to exist at the largest schools, independent free universities are more prevalent in large towns.

Table 4. Location of independent free u's

Town Population	*Free U's*
Less than 10,000	5
10,000- 99,999	6
100,000- 499,999	8
500,000- 999,999	12
1,000,000-7,999,999	4

Small Town Free U's

Free universities located in the smallest towns (less than 10,000 people) often started on campus and later moved into the town. Even when they begin off campus, the founders are usually campus-related people. Arcata Free University (California) started at California State University at Humboldt. Later the free u moved into town and severed formal and financial ties with the college. Everybody's School (New Hampshire) was developed by a Dartmouth College student who had started earlier the Dartmouth Experimental College. An admissions counselor at S.U.N.Y., Stony Brook, spearheads the Community Free School. As universities and towns get larger (Cambridge, Massachusetts; Boulder, Colorado; Chapel Hill, North Carolina) the free university locates off campus within the fringe university community. It draws students from different universities together, services working people and dropouts and provides free or inexpensive learning for all.

Large Town Free U's

The church often hosts the free university in towns of over 100,000 people. The Judson Life School (Minnesota), the Free University of Oklahoma, Free University North (Canada), the Free Community School (Michigan), and the Free University of the Fenway (Massachusetts) are all church-related organizations. Campus ministries run some off-campus free u's (Free University of the Fenway, Free University of Oklahoma); others use church facilities. In one case (Free University of New Orleans), board members of the community center were divided over whether to

permit the free university to use the facilities. Following a vote that pitted the chairman of the board against the majority of members who voted to allow the free u to use the facilities, the board chairman and one other member resigned.

Sometimes free u's in large towns focus on particular subcultures. The San Jose Free University draws primarily from a large, local, drug-oriented "freak" community. Communiversity (Rochester, New York) is a part of the larger Genesee Co-op, "a social, cultural change organization" which "concentrates upon finding and living possible alternative activities."[3] It includes a newspaper *(Alternatives)*, Vietnam Era Veterans Employment counseling service, Switchboard (crises and information referral services), draft counseling, a food co-op, a coffeehouse, and a drug abuse program. Emmaus, an experimental Christian community and center for nonviolent alternatives, draws from the local East Harlem young people as well as from others interested in alternate culture and radical nonviolent political activity in the metropolitan area. In densely populated areas, free u's often cater to particular subcultures. In colleges and towns that are too small for large subgroups, the free university cannot continue unless it has a broader appeal.

FREE U's AND FREE SCHOOLS

Free schools are sometimes considered the elementary and secondary school counterparts of free universities. *New Schools: A National Directory of Alternative Schools* defines these innovative schools as exhibiting these characteristics:

> (a) absence of institutionalized coercion as regards both behavior and curriculum —so no system of demerits, detentions and the like; little or no required attendance at school or classes, and hence no penalties for absence or tardiness; what rules there are generally are made with student participation; (b) de-emphasis on traditional curriculum concerns (e.g., 'major subjects') and encouragement of student choice with a large variety of learning projects, with special emphasis on 'creative' subjects (crafts, arts, writing), student-initiated subjects (often related to the current youth subculture), and affective development (e.g., encounter group and sensitivity training); (c) elimination of dependence on competition and extrinsic motivation and encouragement of authentic self-motivation as the basis of learning activities; hence no grades, no invidious comparisons among students through exams, honors, prizes, tracking; (d) emphasis on individual abilities and character of teachers rather than formal training and certification through teachers' colleges; (e) elimination of rigid age and grade level separation of students—no promotion and flunking; classes and projects often include wide age ranges.[4]

[3] "An Introduction to Genesee Co-op" (mimeographed, November 10, 1971).

[4] Allen Graubard, *New Schools, A National Directory of Alternative Schools* (October 1971), p. 6.

These same characteristics have been used earlier to define free universities.

When the location of free schools is compared with that of free u's, these results occur:

Table 5: Percentage of free schools, free u's, U. S. population and undergraduate students in each region

Region	*Free Schools*[5]	*Free U's*[6]	*U. S. Population*[7]	*Undergraduate Students*[8]
West	27	21	10	13
Northwest	5	2	4	4
North Central	26	25	34	35
South	5	20	25	21
Middle States	22	19	20	19
New England	16	11	6	6

In terms of location, free schools and free u's have many similarities:

1. There are more free schools and free u's per capita in California than in any other state. California has only 10 percent of the population but 27 percent and 21 percent of the free schools and free u's respectively.

2. There are more free universities and free schools per capita in New England than in any other region.

3. The North Central region, with one-third of the total U. S. population, has only one-quarter of the free u's and free schools.

They also have dissimilarities:

1. Free schools are underrepresented in the South, which has 25 percent of the population and only 5 percent of the free schools. Southern free universities make up 20 percent of the total, a figure that is much closer to southern population ratios.

2. There are more free schools per capita in the Northwest than there are free u's. Free universities are underrepresented in the Northwest; free schools are not.

Some of these differences might be influenced by the limitations of the sampling techniques. The absence of free u's in the Northwest may be due not to a real underrepresentation but to my own inability to find them. Based on my own experience, some of the free schools operating in the

[5] *Ibid.*
[6] Lichtman.
[7] 1972 *World Almanac.*
[8] U.S.O.E. data.

South were not discovered by the *New Schools Manual* field workers. In general, though, alternate schools and free universities are located in the same places throughout the nation.

IMMEDIATE LOCATION

Free universities on college campuses often occupy the same kinds of institutional spaces as other university office dwellers: a small cubicle, a cluttered desk. Notes litter the office and telephones hide beneath stacks of paper.

There are notable exceptions. The Experimental College of California State University at Northridge is in an old wooden house on college land. Surrounding it is a large organic garden planted jointly by the Ecology Center and Experimental College students. The University for Man (Kansas) used to be on the second floor of a Baptist campus center, across the street from Kansas State University. In 1971-72 it moved to a large white house complete with a kitchen for cooking classes, arts and crafts space for candlemaking and tie dying, an education library, and two dogs in the yard. In the spring of 1972, UFM also acquired warehouse space. The Experimental College at the City College of San Francisco uses an old wooden barracks building which is midway between the classrooms at the top of the hill and the football field at the bottom. The Experimental University at the University of Virginia rents a large house which was formerly the rectory of the nearby Episcopal Church. Eight students live there and coordinate the free u.

Independent free universities are located in storefronts, churches, garages, and homes. The Free University of Berkeley (California) rents a former church building. Family Mix (California) operates out of a storefront on the fringe of a small shopping center. The San Jose Free University (California) can be found by walking up the alley behind a "movement" bookstore. The San Jose Switchboard staffs the free u. The Boulder Community Free School, located in a warehouse behind the Jabberwocky Book Store, also shares space with Switchboard, a print shop, and the *Straight Creek Journal*. Two free universities, Orpheus (California) and Emmaus (New York), use formerly elaborate townhouses. The only physical space enjoyed by the Free University of San Diego is a post office box. Registration takes place in the streets of La Jolla and groups meet in homes and community facilities.

The neighborhoods of free universities are usually those of young people. Longhairs, sidewalk and porch raps, free presses, switchboards, food cooperatives, little magazines, music floating from third floor rooms, old Volkswagen buses, unpenned dogs, and a general spirit of friendliness pervade free u neighborhoods.

Chapter eight enrollments

WHO ATTENDS FREE UNIVERSITIES?

Attending one free u meeting is a microcosmic experience. The course may be on organic gardening. You look around the class. Most students are white, although a couple of Mexican Americans and blacks may be there too. There are a lot of high school and college age people. Next to you is an old man who's doing the same thing as you, looking while pretending not to look.

Why is he here? "I'm retired now and don't have much to do." On your left sits a young junior high school kid to whom "School is just so boring that I come to free u classes to talk with other people."

At the end of the discussion, you find out more about others. The middle-age couple come because they want help with their vegetable garden. A dormitory resident wonders whether she can grow an organic garden on the roof. Two local businessmen want to know something about foods; by the end of the meeting, they talk about ways to push the free university onto more community people. I come because I'm curiously toying with the idea of how to put a small plot of land (that may surprise me by sprouting) into the truck.

Attendance Data. Most free universities know approximately how many people show up for free university activities, but they keep few records about their students. Free u's lack interest in paper pushing. They also have a strong suspicion that records are dehumanizing. Other organizations, particularly educational institutions, require students to spend endless hours penciling questionnaires, but the results, in terms of better quality education, are imperceptible to most students. So many free u's fail or refuse even to count who attends.

COUNTS AT TWO FREE U's

Two free u's, however, provided particularly ample data. Abenaki Experimental College (the free u at the University of Maine, Orono) was kind enough to gather registration information for the spring '72 term and send it to me. And at the Community Free School, a free university in Boulder, Colorado (near the University of Colorado but independent of it), I came

upon information by accident. I noticed a box of index cards lying in the wastebasket. Thinking I might use the backs of the cards for my own purposes, I took them out. Their fronts contained name, address, age, occupation, and courses for each spring 1971 free u student—a windfall of data.

Both of these free universities are large and active. Both initiate and build alternate culture enterprises. Abenaki builds domes, initiates food and garage cooperatives, and puts together the *Maine Peoples Yellow Pages* (a local access-to-resources booklet). The Community Free School prints its own newspaper, houses the local crisis referral center, runs an elementary school, stimulates food cooperatives, and plans an arts and crafts cooperative.

There are differences too. Abenaki is part of the University of Maine. It is housed in university facilities and bound by university policy. The Community Free School is autonomous, supported by student fees ($10 per term) and other operations of the legal corporation of which it is a part. While not a part of the University of Colorado, the Community Free School is near campus, just behind the main student shopping area.

Table 6. A comparison of enrollments at two free u's

Enrollments	*Community Free School*	*Abenaki Experimental College*
Total	824	600
Female	485 (59%)	348 (58%)
Male	339 (41%)	242 (42%)
College student	221 (39%)	283 (47%)
Nonstudent	342 (61%)	317 (53%)

Abenaki, located on campus, has a greater proportion of university students than the off-campus Community Free School. While the difference is slight, it is characteristic of other free universities. Free u's that are on campus have a difficult time enrolling nonuniversity people. In fact, Abenaki is one of the most successful community involvers of all the dependent free universities. The Free University at the University of Denver, for example, had 80 percent university participants and 20 percent nonuniversity before becoming independent and moving off campus. After moving, its ratios of students reversed from 4:1 university participants to 4:1 community participants.

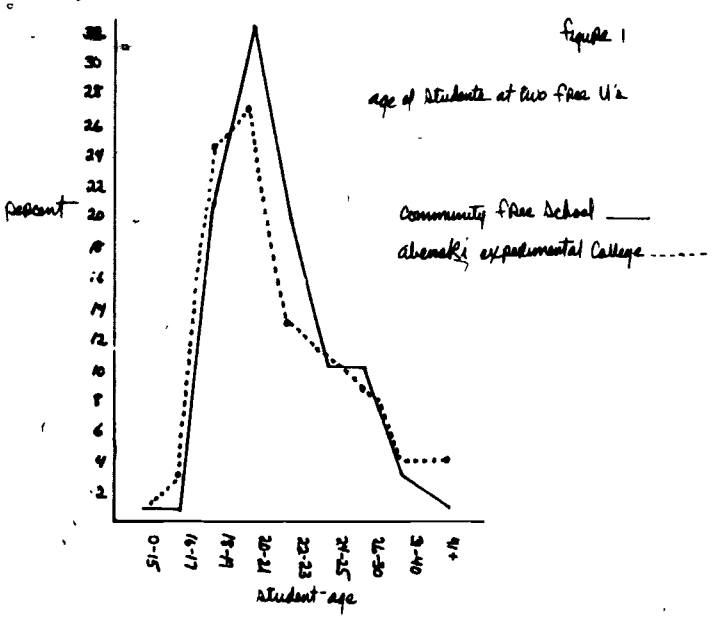
Location is very important in the makeup of free university constituents. The old idea of simply providing access to resources is not enough to draw community people. Universities and colleges are usually alien places seldom frequented by many community people. Those who want to pro-

vide opportunities for people not currently engaged in formal learning can do it better by locating in the midst of target populations.

Age

Most participants at Abenaki and the Community Free School are between 18 and 23. About one-quarter are older and less than 5 percent are younger. The striking similarity of the age distributions at both free universities corresponds with my own observation that free u's are most congenial to young people.

There are, however, exceptions. Some free u's enroll older students, particularly free u's that are located off campus and that are run by noncollege-age people. In 1969, the coordinator of Midpeninsula Free University estimated that the average age of that population was about 28. The former director of the University for Man (Kansas) also estimated that students averaged in their late twenties.



Occupation

The range of occupations is very broad among Abenaki and Community Free School participants. The professional and the janitor attend class together. Free u's are particularly attractive to the housewife/mother who has not yet completed school and seeks intellectual and social stimulation outside the home. She is likely to be one of the older students: at the Community Free School, 29 participating mothers averaged 30.3 years of age. Free u's are also attractive to young people who may have been in college

once but who now work as waitresses, cooks, or dishwashers. Their average age is 22 (Community Free School). Hardhats and bricklayers take part along with artisans and students.

Table 7. Occupations of students at two free u's

Abenaki Experimental College		*Community Free School*	
No.	*Occupation*	*No.*	*Occupation*
283	Student (University of Maine)	221	Student (University of Colorado)
44	Student (high school)	14	Student (other)
35	Unemployed, blank	144	Unemployed, blank
25	Housewife	29	Housewife, mother
21	Teacher	34	Restaurant worker (waiter, waitress, cook, busboy. etc.)
7	Secretary	5	Social worker
5	Carpenter	4	Musician
5	Nurse	3	Janitor
4	Professor	3	Physician
4	Clerk	2	Teacher
4	Kitchen worker	2	Writer
3	Medical center	2	Librarian
3	Community building	2	Researcher
2	Educator	1	each of: Mail clerk, shipping head, dental hygienist, bank teller, engineer, photographer, printer, profit planner, health physics, equipment operator, bus driver, seamstress, carpenter, potter, tutor, yogi, salesgirl, dancer, sales, hardhat, brick layer, scientist, accountant, secretary.
1	each of: Air Force, social worker, salesman, orderly, teacher aide. bartender, dental assistant, term-paper writer, engineer, photographer, ex-serviceman, leather worker, pediatric assistant, bookkeeper, wanderer, draft counselor, citizen, oral historian, dramatics assistant, visitor, donut maker, Coast Guard, clinical psychologist, pilot, garage owner, camera salesman, bennet wholesale, painter, caseworker, biochemist, art dealer, real estate, medical secretary, jack of all trades, babysitter, operator, self-employed farmer, copywriter, family planning, program advisor, computer programmer, woodcutter, crafts person, loafer, administrator, pizza maker, county director, librarian, coupon cutter, open.		

First-time Participants

Registration cards for Community Free School courses asked registrants whether they had participated previously in free university courses. Only

20 percent said they had. Four out of five people were new recruits. This is not unusual. A telephone survey done by the coordinators of Mid-peninsula Free University found that 30 percent of its members were enrolled for a second time. Although the figures fluctuate, dropout rates appear to run generally high in free u's.

There are probably several reasons for this. First, the community from which the free university draws people is very mobile. Students who register often leave the area soon after. Second, courses change each term, bringing in new people with different interests. Third, free u's do not provide continuous, sequential learning. Fourth, free u's are voluntary, and such organizations tend to have high turnover rates. Other interests and responsibilities often take precedence over the luxury of leisure-time learning. Finally, there's one explanation that may be just as accurate: people don't re-enroll because they are unhappy with their previous experience.

Elementary administrative foul-ups, divergent expectations, and whimsical instructors are among the more common reasons for dissatisfaction. A typical administrative foul-up is when class locations or times are changed without notifying a central office or the students. This problem can be eliminated by strategically placed and up-to-date bulletin boards and by close communications between organizers and instructors.

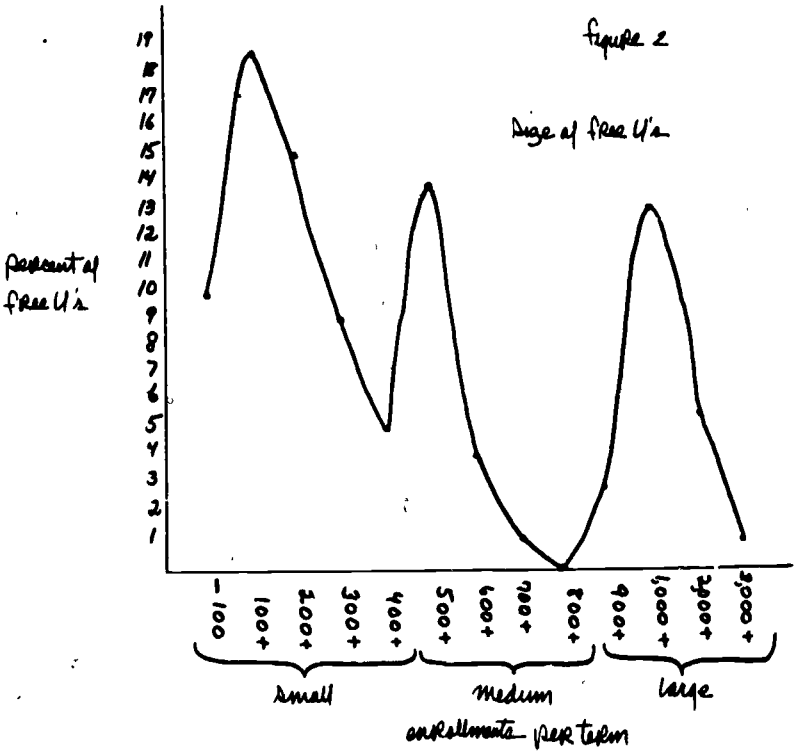
Some free u's have tried to lessen the dropout rates which result from differing expectations. So far, the most successful tactic has been a combination of accurate, specific course descriptions in catalogs and preregistration meetings between potential students and instructors. Early meetings accomplish two purposes: they help instructors know what students are looking for, and they give students a chance to find out whether they will get what they want out of the group. Some expectations are harder to fulfill. Often students expect instructors to dispense information in the incremental way that liquid fills a beaker. Some instructors do give out parcels of specific information but others prefer to discuss rather than imprint ideas, and to work with others to achieve new insights and ends which neither instructor nor students had seen at first. An initial "feeling-out" period can help both student and instructor to know what to expect.

Tentative instructor commitments is another problem. Some instructors volunteer and then cancel when other opportunities arise. Others cancel classes when fewer students than they expected retain enough interest to continue coming. Denver Free University has been able to decrease instructor dropouts by requiring that all instructors contact the free university and describe explicitly their course plans. Each instructor gets a packet of instructions on procedural matters (how to get larger and smaller facilities, what to do if the meeting place is changed, where and how to get

course help). By insuring that instructors are serious about their commitment, Denver Free University had almost no instructor dropouts.

SIZE OF FREE U's

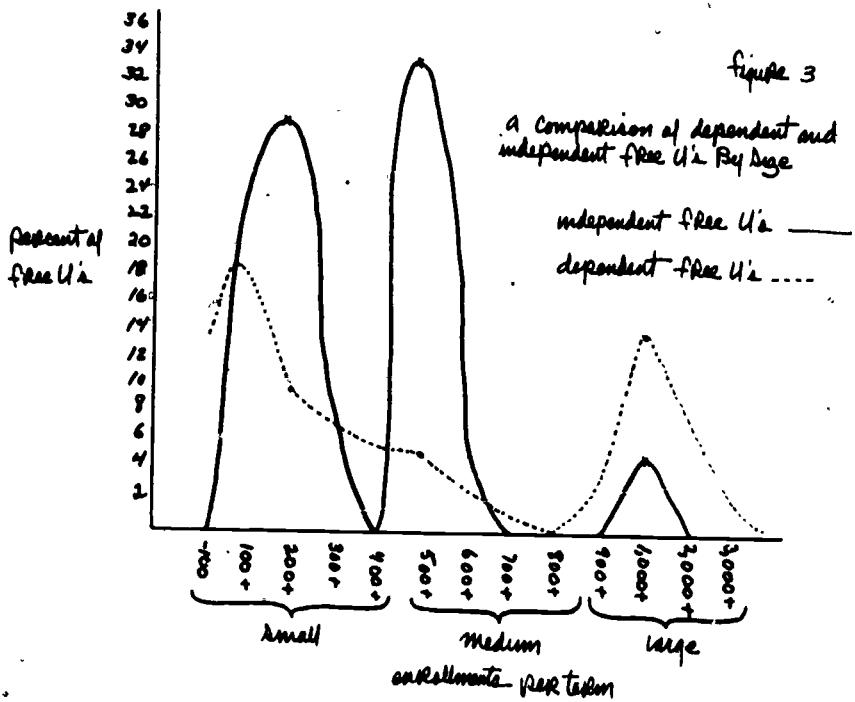
In 1971, about 100,000 people enrolled in free university courses. The free universities range in size from 35 people to over 3,000 but tend to cluster around enrollment ranges of 100-200, 500-600, and 1,000-2,000 (see Figure 2). To put it another way, free u's tend to come in three sizes: large, medium, and small.



The majority of free universities (53.2 percent) are small, but more people enroll in the large free u's than in the combined totals of small and medium size ones.

When independent free university enrollments are charted separately from those that are dependent, some clear differences emerge (see Figure 3). First, independent free u's have three distinct, narrow enrollment ranges; dependent free u's have two broader, less distinct distribu-

tions. The three levels for independent free u's denote three different types of services. Dependent free u's do not have such distinct intervals in which larger enrollments create qualitatively different kinds of organizations.



Second, of the 79 free u's plotted in Figures 2 and 3, none of the independent schools enrolls less than 100 people per term whereas 8 dependent free u's do. More dependent free u's enroll between 100 and 200 people than any other subsequent interval on that scale. In contrast, few independent free u's operate at that low level of enrollment.

This second category of differences arises, in part, from institutional affiliation. Dependent free u's get support from other campus organizations and can hang on despite decreasing interest or less effective leadership. Independent free u's don't have this kind of support to carry them over. If interest flags or leadership leaves, the free u is discontinued. If donations do not come in, independent free u's cannot put out brochures or pay the rent. They disappear. The enrollment level that provides enough psychological gratification, if not remunerative support, to keep them going is around 200 participants. With fewer participants, those doing the free u may doubt whether it is as necessary as they thought.

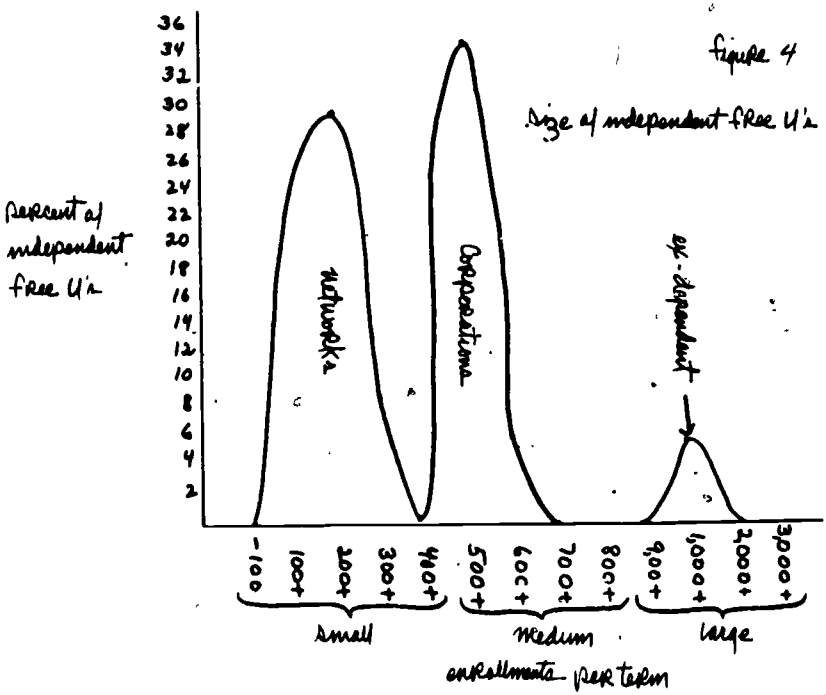
How deeply are dependent free u's affected by their ties with colleges

and universities? For some, these ties allow struggling ideas the time to get started. In periods of uncertainty, institutional affiliation can make the difference between survival and extinction. For others, though, support from the parent institution only lengthens the death rattle, prolonging an unresponsive and obsolete organization. Because independent free u's have fewer contingencies they reflect more directly the extent to which they are perceived as useful to a community.

Free u's with enrollment intervals of between 100 and 200, 500 and 600, and 1,000 and 2,000 make up almost half (45.6 per cent) of all free universities. These intervals represent different kinds of free u's. The intervals in which there are only a few free u's (400-500, 700-800) are transition stages, movements from one type of free university to another. When independent free u's are looked at separately, the functionally distinct types and the transition phases are clearly revealed.

TYPES OF INDEPENDENT FREE U's

To identify the three typs of independent free u's, the terms "networks," "corporations," and "ex-dependent free u's" are used.



Networks

The smallest independent free u's, those with enrollments between 100 and 400, are networks that match people wanting to learn something with others willing to share their expertise. Networks have almost no organization and structure; they simply provide opportunities for people to get together. One or two people arrange these small free u's by welcoming suggestions for courses, answering inquiries, and publishing brochures. Interested persons contact individual course organizers directly rather than going through the free u organizers. Budgets are usually less than $50. Beacon Hill Free School is a good example of the network type free u:

> Since April of 1970 the Beacon Hill Free School has offered over 100 courses to hundreds of people from all over at no cost. Classes are held in the evenings, in various locations. The class space is donated by our hosts, and instructors all volunteer their services. What smallish costs accrue for printing, mailing and the like are met by donations from kind friends, and an occasional rummage sale. There are no requirements, no tests, no grades, credits or degrees. Catalogs are shaped at the General Meetings held every three months, where anyone of any age is free to take what is offered. What administration there is [is] performed by two people and a small volunteer staff. The purpose of the Free School is to get people together, utilizing the resources within the community, human and material. . . . Important: Please call instructor before attending a class for the first time. See course listing for telephone number.

Networks function well with 200-300 people. When they get larger, they require more finances, organization, and commitments. But larger enrollments and projects are sometimes tempting. Coordinators reason, "With a little more advertising we could probably get 500 people. If each paid $5 per term and there were four terms a year, we'd have $10,000." But this change has other effects on the network. Its looseness is lost. Time responsibilities of coordinators increase geometrically from an average of five hours a week to 50 hours. The new organization acquires the problems of larger free u's: legal ones of incorporation and tax exemption, administrative burdens of bookkeeping and registration, housekeeping chores, rental payments. Instructors have to be recruited, syllabi submitted (sometimes), advertising put together and curricula made broad enough to have wide appeal. Networks which are only half as large have a small fraction of the headaches of larger free u's.

Corporations

Incorporated free u's, which fall in the 500-700 enrollment range, are those that have enough students to support a structure and staff. They incorporate legally as nonprofit educational institutions, charge tuition, pay staff salaries, provide and stimulate community workshops and services, and act as a focus for alternate culture activity. People thinking of starting a free u that is to be a self-sustaining, centralized, tuition charging

organization should assess whether their community will supply at least 500 paying students per term. If not, a network free u would probably work better.

In contrast to the smaller networks, incorporated free u's centralize and search for more people to be brought into the free u. They rent facilities, publish magazines, shield budding groups, and support and protect fresh ideas until they become reality. Street theatres, communes, new creative arts magazines, ecology projects, and social action groups are often launched by these free u's.

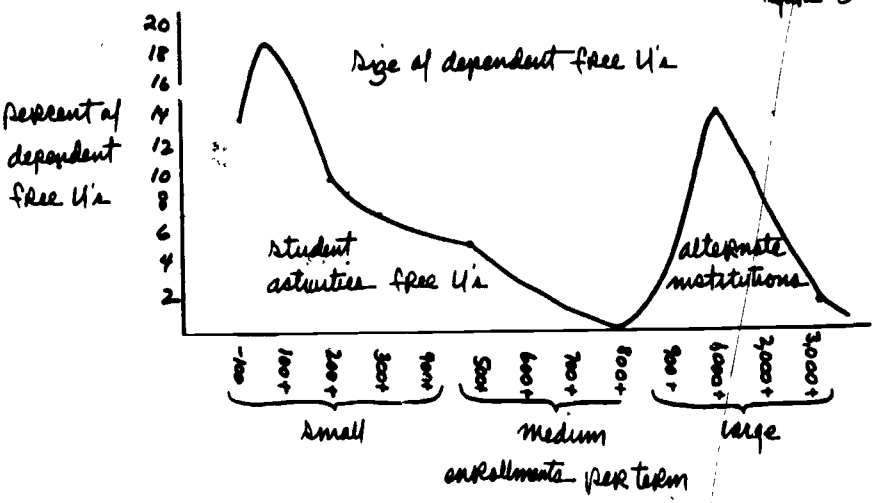
Ex-Dependent Free U's

The largest independent free u's are those that started on campus and later moved off. Although there are only two free u's that fall in this category — Denver Free University and the Minnesota Free University — both create new learning environments, organize alternate services such as food cooperatives, and remain interested in educational reform at all levels. Both are incorporated yet also perform a networking function for their respective cities, stimulating and advertising new struggling alternate institutions, services, and people.

DEPENDENT FREE U's

Dependent free u's fall into less clearly defined types: student activities and alternate institutions.

figure 5



Student-Activity Free U's

The free universities with the lowest enrollment are usually short-lived. Many are located in nonsupportive environments: church-related schools,

community colleges, or less selective colleges. Typically, these free u's operate for six months to two years and disappear when the founders move on. The adoption by the parent institution of such innovations as the 4-1-4 calendar, minicourses, and experimenting subcolleges also tends to do in the small dependent free university, eliminating the purpose for which it was created.

If these extracurricular free u's grow, they become extensions of the student activities offices, student government committees, and campus ministries. They offer discussion groups not otherwise available on campus. They plan films and lectures, arrange courses, and get faculty members to teach courses in their hobbies rather than in their professional specializations. Student activities free u's are often highly structured with constitutions, committees, advisory boards, directors, and line-item budgets. As enrollments increase, they often take on a broader community clientele. They stimulate an increased student awareness of the issues of educational reform and student-initiated curricula.

Alternate Institutions

The largest dependent free u's are institutions-within-institutions. They encourage counter culture interests, lobby for educational changes, initiate social action through investigative projects, and introduce communities to new ideas. Often they start food cooperatives, build domes on campus, help legal aid attorneys and law students develop legal cooperatives and peoples law schools, sympathize with radical but not revolutionary politics, work to save the environment, turn university land into organic gardens, and help community mothers start day care centers and alternate schools for their own children. Because they are large and receive funds from the student government, they become one of the most powerful student-initiated forces on campus. As they grow, they feel the restraints of campus ties and seek ways to broaden community involvement while also affecting the undergraduate's educational experience.

Some, like the University for Man (Kansas), move off campus into the larger civic community and focus on new forms of community learning. Others, like the Davis Experimental College (California), stay on campus and concentrate on encouraging more students to take an active part in their education by initiating their own research, taking on independent study, and developing programs that will be of greater educational value to them.

Chapter nine
finances

Free u's have budgets that range from $0 (paper, advertising, space, mimeograph machine donated) to $20,000 a year. Most (about 90 percent) operate on less than the lowest average compensation paid to one faculty member in the 1,000 colleges and universities surveyed by the American Association of University Professors (1969-70).

How can they get by on so little? First, space is usually donated. Classes are held in empty community facilities, public libraries, homes, and parks. Teachers, too, are not paid. Most have full-time jobs elsewhere and do not depend for their livelihood on the free u. They teach in their free time. Finally, bureaucracy and all its attendant paraphernalia are kept to a bare minimum.

DEPENDENT FREE U's

Free u's that are located on campus are usually supported by student governments. Their allocations run up to $11,000 a year (Experimental College, Oregon State University). The 1971 median income for these free u's was $1,550. Other sources of funding for dependent free universities are donations from participants, residence hall budgets, union program boards, and graduate student associations.

The bulk of the on-campus free u expenses are usually printing costs. A few free u's also pay salaries for coordinating staff. At the University for Man (Kansas), the coordinator is a half-time member of the Department of Continuing Education, solely responsible for running the free university. She shares her salary with other free u workers.

Although most free u's funded by student governments do not pay salaries to their coordinators, this is changing. Paid coordinators say that the benefits of having someone who is responsible for daily details, reliable about doing things, and known by others as the person to go to outweigh the added costs. In fact, they recommend to people starting new free u's that the budget allow for at least one part-time person from the outset. Volunteers can do the job well, but they are not as dependable as people who are paid to do it.

INDEPENDENT FREE U's

Free u's that don't depend on colleges and universities must find support in the community, so many charge tuition. The average tuition at independent free u's in $5, which is good for as many courses per term as the participant wants to take; the maximum fee is $15. Other sources of income are donations, coffeehouse earnings, campus ministries, and special benefits. The Free University North (Canada) received a short-term grant in 1971-72 from the Canadian government. As far as I can determine, only one free u in the U. S. received funds in 1971 from the federal government (Law Enforcement Assistance Act) and none received support from foundations. Degree sales has been a successful project for Rochdale, a free u located near the University of Toronto; $29,000 was raised through degree sales in two years. Here's the pitch:

> Tuition for the B.A. granting course is $25.00. Course length is 24 hours, and the degree will be awarded on the answering of a skill testing question. Tuition for the M.A. is $50.00. During this course, the length of which will be determined by the student, the student will be required to answer a skill testing question of his choice. For a Ph.D., the tuition is $100.00 and there will be no questions asked.
>
> We are also offering Non-Degrees at comparable rates. A Non-Ph.D. is $25.00. Course duration is your choice; requirements are simple, we ask that you say something. A Non-M.A. is $50.00 for which we require you to say something logical. A Non-B.A. will cost you $100.00; you will be required to say something useful.[1]

Since independent free u's must pay rent, telephone, salaries, and publicity, higher incomes are usually necessary than for on-campus free u's. For instance, the Free University of Berkeley has an annual income of $12,000 (from the $10 tuition fees). Its expenses include salaries ($4,320), catalogs ($2,100), utilities ($500), telephone ($1,000), rent ($4,200), and office supplies ($200).

In a few cases, free universities in the large towns look beyond hand-to-mouth subsistence. The originator of Entropy (San Francisco, California) figured that if 600 people enrolled each term and paid $15 each, he could support three full-time staff people and pay token fees for instructors. A note I received in January 1972 said, "As you can see, because of the drop in students and the present rise in costs, we can barely survive." But if goals are modest (a $3,000 rather than $8,000 per year salary) and coordinators do not need to feed too many people, free u's can make it on very low budgets. Grandiose plans (including, in the cases of Entropy and the Community Free School, the formation of larger corporations with subsidiary services to support the free university) have not worked.

[1] Advertisement for degree sales, Rochdale College, Canada.

FOUND RESOURCES

The traditional idea of a school, college, or university as a place with its own facilities, staff, turf, and buildings is not the only way of conceiving education. "Found" facilities and resources are another way to extend learning.

Why build new school buildings when there are unused facilities in cities, office buildings, and public centers? Most facilities — schools, offices, libraries, community centers, churches, stores — are not used to full capacity. Schools usually don't meet in the evenings; churches are busy only a few hours a day; community centers often want increased usage, particularly in the mornings; vacant lots full of broken glass can be used for organic gardens or parks; the possibilities are endless. Schools are built as special, one-purpose buildings. The new super school buildings are frigid places to learn in. In 1971, some 10,000 free u teachers found good, inexpensive places for their groups to meet in, and these places were typically integrating. They integrated people with each other and with what they were learning.

Staff, too, can be a "found" resource. There are many people in communities who are willing and anxious to share their expertise and knowledge with others. They can prepare courses and see them through in a very responsible way. And they are willing to teach for little or no money. As with facilities, all you have to do is find them.

Chapter Ten
an introduction to free U curricula

Free u courses reflect what people need, what they want to learn, and what resources are available in communities to make that possible. The purpose of Part Three is not only to clue you in on the contents of free u courses, but also to present creative ideas you can adapt in your own spaces. If you are involved in a local free u. approach this part as you would a free smorgasbord: pick and choose alluring ideas to explore at home. Plagiarize freely.

Free u's sponsored 10,000 courses in 1971. They ranged from candle-making and divorce workshops, homesteading, the stockmarket and yoga to underwater limnology laboratories. Some coordinators argue against any classification of free u courses. They feel that their own free u is the result of a particular set of circumstances and cannot be compared to other free universities without deception. For even though the same course titles are offered at several free u's, the development, content, and goals of these courses differ. But despite these differences, the extensive similarity of free u courses indicates that people widely separated by distance and background express similar needs and interests.

A Note on Terminology. Free u's are not consistent in their description of what kinds of groups are offered. They may be called "courses," "groups," "workshops," and "meetings." These terms are interchangeable but for the sake of consistency, I call them courses. For the same reason I call the people who volunteer to lead these courses teachers or instructors. Some free u's resist these terms because they have been associated with a controlling authority. However, there are many kinds of courses and many kind of teachers. The consistent use of these terms implies no uniform relationship between course members.

THREE KINDS OF COURSES

Standard academic course categories do not shed much light on the nature of learning in free u's. Many free u courses are simply not academic (although some are). Trying to squeeze free u's into that mold is like trying to put a size 8 dress on a size 20 woman. Some better fitting outfit needs to be devised.

Table 8. Numbers and kinds of courses at independent free u's (% in parentheses)

Location	*Name*	*Skills*	*Awareness*	*Academic*	*Term* 1971
California	Arcata Free University	19 (54)	9 (25)	7 (21)	Spring
	Entropy	81 (66)	28 (22)	13 (12)	Summer
	Family Mix	22 (78)	3 (11)	3 (11)	Summer
	Free University of Berkeley	54 (58)	28 (30)	11 (12)	Fall
	Free University of San Diego	16 (60)	7 (26)	4 (14)	Fall
	Heliotrope	29 (59)	6 (15)	13 (26)	Fall
	Orpheus	27 (64)	12 (09)	4 (27)	Spring
	San Jose Free University	12 (52)	7 (30)	4 (18)	Summer
	Sherwood Oaks Experimental College	30 (79)	5 (13)	3 (08)	Summer
Canada	Vancouver Free University	36 (38)	20 (22)	37 (40)	Fall
Colorado	Boulder Community Free School	43 (61)	17 (24)	11 (15)	Spring
	Denver Free University	27 (47)	19 (30)	14 (23)	Fall
District of Columbia	Washington Area Free University	23 (49)	9 (18)	15 (33)	Summer
Indiana	Free University, Indianapolis	7 (64)	0 (00)	4 (36)	Fall
Louisiana	Free University of New Orleans	9 (38)	6 (25)	9 (37)	Fall
Massachusetts	Beacon Hill Free School	24 (61)	6 (16)	9 (23)	Fall
	Communiversity	20 (40)	3 (06)	27 (54)	Spring
	Smith Experimental College	10 (45)	5 (24)	7 (32)	Fall
	Waterfield Free School	17 (81)	1 (05)	3 (14)	Fall
Michigan	Free Community School of Detroit	13 (68)	3 (16)	3 (16)	Fall
Missouri	Peoples' School '71	9 (33)	4 (15)	14 (52)	Spring
New York	Emmaus	4 (33)	3 (25)	5 (42)	Fall
Oklahoma	Free University	7 (28)	3 (11)	16 (61)	Spring
Pennsylvania	Free University, State College	16 (45)	12 (33)	8 (22)	Winter
Tennessee	Free University of Nashville	26 (66)	3 (08)	10 (26)	Fall
Texas	University of Thought	27 (50)	8 (18)	10 (22)	Fall
Wisconsin	Free University, Madison	7 (37)	4 (21)	8 (42)	Fall
TOTAL (Independent Free U's)		615 (55)	231 (20.7)	272 (24.3)	

Table 9. Numbers and kinds of courses at campus-based free u's (% in parentheses)

Location	*Name*	*Skills*	*Awareness*	*Academic*	*Term* 1971
Alabama	Extracurricular Studies Program	4 (40)	1 (10)	5 (50)	Fall
Arkansas	Free University	10 (46)	6 (26)	7 (28)	Fall
California	Experimental College				
	California State University at Fullerton	19 (38)	16 (33)	13 (29)	Spring
	California State University at Long Beach	8 (25)	8 (25)	16 (50)	Spring
	California State University at Los Angeles	9 (34)	11 (42)	6 (24)	Spring
	City College of San Francisco	15 (57)	8 (29)	4 (14)	Spring
	California State University at San Diego	26 (52)	14 (30)	9 (18)	Spring
	California State University at Northridge	14 (33)	12 (27)	19 (40)	Spring
	California State University at San Jose	12 (55)	3 (15)	6 (30)	Spring
	University of California, Irvine	12 (92)	1 (08)	0 (00)	Spring
	University of California, Los Angeles	10 (42)	11 (46)	3 (12)	Spring
	University of Southern California	3 (25)	3 (25)	6 (50)	Spring
	University for Man	16 (38)	12 (29)	14 (33)	Fall
Connecticut	Experimental College, University of Connecticut	21 (39)	8 (16)	24 (45)	Spring
	Free School of New Haven	13 (62)	1 (05)	7 (33)	Spring
Delaware	Delaware Free University	10 (83)	1 (08)	1 (08)	Fall
Georgia	Center for Participant Education	25 (40)	18 (29)	20 (31)	Fall
Florida	Free College, Emory University	10 (71)	0 (00)	4 (29)	Fall
	Free University, Georgia Tech	6 (31)	5 (27)	8 (44)	Fall
Illinois	Alternate University, University of Illinois	10 (56)	4 (22)	4 (22)	Fall
	S.W.I.L.C.	21 (64)	6 (18)	6 (18)	Fall
Indiana	Free University of Muncie	10 (40)	2 (08)	13 (52)	Fall
Kansas	University for Man	25 (62)	5 (13)	10 (25)	Summer
Maine	Abenaki Experimental College	18 (53)	3 (09)	13 (38)	Fall

(Continuation of Table 9)

Location	*Name*	*Skills*	*Awareness*	*Academic*	*Term* 1971
Michigan	Free University of Ann Arbor	13 (45)	5 (17)	11 (38)	Spring
	Free University, Michigan State University	16 (62)	7 (27)	3 (11)	Fall
	Free University at Wayne	5 (42)	3 (25)	4 (33)	Fall
Missouri	Communiversity	28 (46)	16 (27)	16 (27)	Fall
New Jersey	Free University, Seton Hall University	14 (56)	4 (16)	7 (28)	Spring
New Mexico	Amistad	5 (33)	4 (30)	6 (37)	Spring
North Carolina	Free University, Duke University	13 (54)	5 (21)	6 (25)	Fall
Ohio	Free University, John Carroll University	8 (50)	4 (25)	4 (25)	Spring
Pennsylvania	Free University, University of Pennsylvania	32 (43)	19 (24)	26 (33)	Spring
	Free University, Villanova University	3 (27)	0 (00)	8 (73)	Spring
	Free University, Edinboro State College	2 (18)	5 (41)	5 (41)	Fall
Utah	Free University of Utah	15 (44)	10 (28)	10 (28)	Fall
Virginia	Experimental University	10 (34)	12 (41)	7 (25)	Spring
TOTAL (Campus Based Free U's)		480 (45.1)	253 (23.8)	331 (31.1)	
TOTAL (All Free U's)		1095 (50.2)	484 (22.2)	603 (27.6)	

Acting on the hunch that the process of learning may be more suitable for classification than the content, I have clustered courses into three groups: skills, awareness, and academic.

Skills courses: These are "How To . . ." courses. They fall into nine groups: *arts* (theatre troupes, dance groups, painting and drawing, writing workshops), *business* (how to predict the stock market, bookkeeping, counter-culture economics), *crafts* (macrame, weaving, stained glass, handwriting analysis, glassblowing), *education* (how to create an alternate school, alternatives for high school kids, speedreading), *home skills* (natural childbirth, organic gardening, yogurt making), *languages, music* (guitar instruction, "Tickling the Ivories," sweet adelines singing group), *sports and games* (mountaineering, Go, football), and *trades* (how to get a divorce, dome construction, VW repair). Languages included here are not studies of grammar or literature, but are crash courses in conversation.

Awareness courses: These could be called "head trips." They deal with sensitizing individuals to interpersonal, innerpersonal, and psychic phenomena. They include the myriad of quasi-psychological courses in *individual awareness* (encounter and sensitivity groups, analysis of dreams, groups aimed at developing closeness to others or creativity in one's own life), *liberation* (of men, women, kids, gays and grays), *mysticism and the occult* (tarot, E.S.P., astrology), *religions, university-community relations,* and *yoga.*

Academic courses: These sound like typical college and university liberal arts courses. They include things like "the philosophy and works of . . ." Joyce, Yeats, Shakespeare, Milton, Hesse, a lecture series in western philosophy, sociology courses ("Indian Cultures in Pre-Hispanic America," "The Welfare System," "Economics of Poverty," "Introduction to Sociology," "Drug Use and Abuse"), history and political science courses. Academic courses are broken into the following categories: *arts, economics, education, environment, literature and poetry, philosophy, political theories, psychology, sociology, religion, technology,* and *miscellaneous* (taster's choice). These courses are usually discusssion groups, often with textbooks.

DATA ANALYSIS

The data for this analysis of free u courses come from the catalogues of 64 free u's. These free u's do not differ significantly in size, location, or year started from the total of known free u's. There are slightly more independent free u's in the sample (42%) than their total incidence in the population (31%).

The courses in each brochure fell into the three categories of skills, awareness, and academic (Tables 8 and 9). Half of all the courses

offered were skills courses. More courses had as a goal the achievement of a specific ability than anything else. About one out of four courses (27.6%) centered on academic topics. Slightly less than one fourth of all the courses (22.2%) were awareness or "head" courses, centering around the achievement of new religious, personal, and interpersonal insights.

These figures permit some general conclusions about free u courses and dispel some popular assumptions. The courses in the free u's are more manual and less intellectual than those in regular colleges and universities. In their curricula free universities are more like community colleges, vocational schools, and adult schools than they are like liberal arts colleges. But free u's cannot be characterized as antiintellectual because over one-fourth of all their courses could be considered intellectual, dealing with ideas. Finally, those who accuse free u's of "touchie-feelie" exclusiveness are, at best, overstating the case. The total of all courses in encounter sensitivity, liberation, mysticism, religions, and yoga is only slightly more than one-fifth of the total number of courses offered. A more detailed description of the kinds of things that happen in free u's follows.

Chapter eleven
Skills Courses

ARTS

Free u arts emphasize expression, enjoyment, and cooperation rather than technique. Theater and dance troupes, creative arts magazines and newspapers, films, and individual development in these skills are the products. The mobilization of internal energy into creative expression usually results in a unique, often spontaneous, cathartic work of art.

Some groups concentrate on basic techniques, but most try to free the individual to create new forms.

> It is hoped that we will lay the foundation for a community theatre of ecstasy and confrontation rather than a theatre of insipid entertainment where the actor merely 'exhibits' his ego.
>
> —University for Man, California

Theater

In 1971, 14 free u's sponsored community theater troupes. Whole productions were written, rehearsed, and produced by newly formed groups:

> We need you if you would enjoy writing scripts, making costumes, making puppets, acting, making sets and props, and doing anything else that would contribute. This workshop is definitely production oriented.
>
> —Womens Street Theatre, Family Mix, California

Speech, mime, and experimental drama are complemented by Theater of Magic. Precise technique takes second place to expressive creativity. Experimental theater often delves into politics and community problems. Street theater, puppet shows, and morality plays are staged. Troupes seldom act out "classic" plays. Scripts are usually authored by members of the troupe with few classic scripts used. Production directors are often people who have extensive experience in the theater. A common text is Jerzy Grotowski's *Towards a Poor Theatre*.

The objective of acting is to release players from scripts, costumes, props, and music to probe their own physical and spiritual capabilities. Ultimately, new individual and audience perceptions occur.

> Technical Design for Theater and Studio: A "nuts and bolts" approach to theater and studio lighting, sound, setting, and acoustics. Emphasis is expected

to be on evaluating the needs of new installations and modification of existing installations to make them more workable. Also covered will be practical scenic construction and lighting design. This class should be of interest to anyone expecting to have any contact with theatre or studio design and/or use.

—University for Man, California

Most theater though is oriented toward developing new insights into oneself, producing a show, and enjoying it—all at the same time.

Dance

The common themes of the theater are also the common themes of free u dance groups. Dance instructors try to get their students to express ideas through movement. The goal is to release tensions in a creative, individual way. Dance workshops are geared to the inexperienced person who wants to relax, to "let go."

Dance: Beginning Modern, Technique and Theory: Designed to introduce movement, the psychic and physical flow of energy to people whose work and life style has led them to adopt heavy and unresponsive motion. This course will explore physical activity as a means to combat anger and a way of releasing mental tension. Lectures will explore dance as ritual and magic, showing its place in society as an alternative to a negative feelings buildup.

I have been dancing since age 7. Professional experience: 2 years Long Beach International Ballet Co., OBA; Dance Corp. Masami Kumi (director) CSCF, Lead dancer, Dudesheep Theatre Co., Ric Montejano (choreographer); Assistant Choreographer on "Touch;" dance teacher; Scorpio Rising Theatre, Los Angeles.

—Heliotrope, California

There are a lot of group dances including folk (Greek, Balkan, Israeli, and Rumanian), children's dance (Afro-Haitian, creative dance), tap, ballroom, ballet, jazz and square dancing.

Drawing and Painting

While theater is a collective endeavor climaxing in group productions, painting and drawing are individual expressions. As with the other arts, courses in drawing and painting range from elementary technique to color therapy, art as a cathartic release of tension, and "Gestalt in Watercolor":

The instructor is seeking students who are genuinely interested in using watercolor as a means of expressing abstract forms and symbolic thoughts from the unconscious. The course will not be one where the 'typical' watercolor technique of painting, i.e., seascapes, landscapes, etc., will be taught, but a more psychological view will be taken of these same subjects plus many others.

—Family Mix, California

Just as free u theater sometimes uses textbooks advocating expressive creativity, free u drawing does the same. Four free u's workshops followed *The Natural Way to Draw*, a text by Kimon Nicholaides.

The impulse to draw is as natural as the impulse to talk. There is only one way to draw and it's a perfectly natural way. It has nothing to do with artifice or technique. It has only to do with the act of correct observation, and by that I mean a physical contact with all sorts of objects through the senses.

—Free University of Berkeley, California

Drawing and painting courses are especially popular at free u's on college campuses where university courses are open only to a few people. Through the free u, nonart majors take art courses taught often by advanced art students. Sometimes local artists offer courses through the free university:

Instructor recently held a one-woman art show for her work at the Lucien Sabaulset Galleries. She has studied at the College of Arts and Crafts in Oakland, and at the SF Art Institute. She received her BA in fine arts from the State University of Iowa and has taught a successful art class at Entropy.

—Entropy, California

One course which truly extends the idea of unscheduled, individualized instruction, and presents a good argument as to why painting should *not* take place in the classroom, at least on the elementary level, is the "Liberated Self through Painting and Ceramics":

Call the instructor anytime for individual self-help. No class. You can be a successful artist, because you are already a work of art. Gordon is a professional painter and potter who wants to help people who want to help themselves. He is not teaching a class. "I have watched beginning artists in classrooms lose the individuality through the imposition of flashier, therefore more 'successful' artists. I'll tell you how to set up your own work space, care for your materials, and play with them so that they can fit into your own environment. When you feel that you have something to show or discuss, we will get together for discussion of your work progress, and your own unique developments."

—Vancouver Free University, Canada

Why isn't there more street art sponsored by free u's? I could find only one course:

Mosaic Mural Design and Cinematography: The class will actually work on executing murals for public service projects in San Francisco while filming a documentary on the project. The mosaic group (limited to ten) will need a set of professional ceramic tile snips (costing about $7.50), a hammer, and small cement trowel. Tile will be supplied. Cinematographers will have to own a 16mm camera and be able to purchase film and processing. Projection and splicing equipment will be supplied.

The instructor is responsible for the many walls of stone and tile murals at Steinhart Aquarium. His mosaics are also seen in commercial buildings and Synanon in Oakland. His public service activities include assisting with further mosaic work at Synanon, the Western Addition Youth Club, and doing Spanish DJ broadcasts over KOFY-AM.

—Entropy, California

Writing Workshops

Of all the arts, writing is the most popular. Would-be authors come to the free u first to try out their creations. They meet in the public parks, garrets, living rooms, and once in a while in a classroom. They write songs, novels, poems, and children's literature:

> Children's Stories for Peace: Each of us will write a short children's story about world peace and brotherhood in an attempt to instill the very young with a strong sense of the moral injustice of violence and war.
>
> —Community Free School, Colorado

As outlets for their own and local creative talent, five free u's developed literary magazines in 1971 and two free u's initiated local free presses. In addition some of them tried to help their writers learn the ropes with courses like "Writing and Editing for Magazines" and "Breaking into Print." Other courses were popular enough in the free u's to forecast their future inclusion in regular university curricula: "Developing Foundation Proposals," "Fantasy and Science Fiction," and "Creative Writing for Scientists."

The emphasis on individual creativity as opposed to formal technique is a major distinction between courses in free u's and those in other educational institutions. Free u classes in the arts are more individualized, more "experimental," and more creative; they are less basic and technical than classes in other places. The free u starts with individualized expressions. Technique comes later as a means to better express individual capabilities.

BUSINESS

It is a common misconception that free u's are anti-business. One quarter of the dependent free u's and almost one half of the autonomous free u's have at least one course in business skills. There are some standard business courses: computer programming, market research, sales, real estate and housing, stocks, investing, insurance, data processing, marketing, accounting, and bookkeeping. Bookkeeping may be dull, but people have to support themselves some way. Here's one explanation:

> Nothing could be more bourgeois but it's a handy thing to know as long as you have to work in that world outside. It pays better than typing and is more interesting. You can even use it for a movement organization. The course will cover completely double-entry bookkeeping. And hopefully will qualify you for a job (as long as you fake previous experience).
>
> —Free University of Berkeley, California

Just because the courses are available does not mean that they meet. At the Community Free School (Boulder, Colorado), only one person enrolled for "Information Management Tools," a course which was billed as a bookkeeping encounter.

Most free u business courses are not the common ones. There are courses for small enterprises ("Survival Techniques for Small Businesses"), for people's enterprises, and for food and crafts cooperative management. Some confront personal problems such as "How to Get a Job and Write a Resume." Others are lessons on money: "How to Budget Your Money," "How to Get a Foundation Grant," "How to Predict the Stock Market and Get Rich in Three Easy Lessons," or "How to Panhandle Creatively." For the alternate culture community there are lessons on "Cooperative Management and Development," the "Economics of Capitalism," working with business people ("Business—Freak Interface"), establishing an independent credit union, and bartering. Alternative Education, the free u at California State College at Sacramento, put out the *Bart Booklet* which listed people willing to do specific jobs in exchange for something needed. For example:

> In the case of John, you might have to supply some paper and ink for his printing machine, but the use of the machine and his labor might be traded for a free meal or the use of your washing machine a couple of times.
>
> —Alternative Education, California

Several free u's have developed "Peoples Yellow Pages" which list inexpensive, non-"rip-off" community resources. Free u business courses improve the community by stimulating new services using honest community people.

CRAFTS

The popularity of crafts courses signals a return to the pleasures of individual craftsmanship in place of mass production and anonymity. Free u's offer more courses in crafts than in any other skill. At the 64 free u's studied, 55 offered 172 crafts courses that included macrame (22), sewing (15), weaving (10), ceramics and pottery (15), silkscreen (9), batik (8), leathercrafting (8), candlemaking, knitting, crocheting, needlework, stained glass, jewelry-making, beadwork, handwriting analysis, winemaking, Japanese flower arranging, woodcarving, beekeeping, calligraphy, and basketry. Other groups met for cartooning, oriental rugs, liquor discriminating, American antiques, 3-D optics, glassblowing, lace making, book binding, rock grinding, blacksmithing, tapestry, linoleum block printing, fiberglass workshop, ring making, fingerpainting, upholstering, clay sculpting, poster design, and origami.

In addition to these courses, there were also 58 film and photography courses which ranged from basic techniques to joint film productions:

> Researching, writing, filming (moving and still), taping, editing and production of a fifty minute multi-media and audio-visual presentation as the last 'lecture'

. . . on the subject of twentieth century culture from Freud and Picasso to Levi-Strauss and the Beatles.

—Abenaki Experimental College, Maine

Film series on art (Abenaki, Maine), prisons (Beacon Hill Free School, Massachusetts), local filmmakers (Free U. of Nashville, Tennessee), experimental films teamed with classics and exam week tension breakers (Experimental College, University of Connecticut), and foreign films (Free U. at Wayne, Michigan) were shown.

EDUCATION

Free u's set up new schools and work for changes within the old. They focus on nonpublic, child-centered (rather than curriculum or teacher dominated), community-initiated schooling. Courses in how to set up new schools turn out to be little more than introductory organizational meetings for people who want to create or to help a new school. One group at Denver Free University describes itself:

People who are vitally interested in forming an education alternative (such as parents and kids and prospective teachers) can use this class as an organizational meeting. If enough people attend with common interests (age level, geographic location, philosophy, world view, or whatever), immediate action can be taken toward setting up a school or schools. People will be available to give advice about meeting legal requirements.

—Denver Free University, Colorado

During 1971, other free u's were instrumental in developing new schools. Orpheus (California) started a junior high school. Entropy (California) helped staff a pre-school. The Free University of New Orleans (Louisiana) provided volunteers for the Alternate High School, which lasted only several months. The Free University of Berkeley informed people about three local alternate school programs. The Experimental College at California State University at Fullerton asked for volunteers to aid children whose schools were damaged in the earthquake. University for Man (Kansas) is still looking for ways to help high school students; parents, students, community, university, and high school people are being helped to develop "relevant, outside-the-classroom learning experiences for high school students." Countless people, first meeting each other through the free university, have gone on to create their own independent schools.

The next best alternative to setting up new schools is changing old ones. A few free u's plan teaching workshops. Some are called encounters or transactional analysis for teachers. There is one course aimed at helping teachers learn "How to Make Practical Changes within the Public School System." The Free University at Wayne had a course in "Educational Process," to define and examine the differences between good and bad

learning situations, to confront problems inherent in holding a free university class, and to learn from each other's experiences.

Some free u's offer opportunities to improve learning skills. These include courses in speedreading and speedwriting, typing, how to take tests, how to write term papers, and the use of indexes and abstracts. Several free u's have "Dis-Orientation" sessions designed to help students adjust faster and more realistically to college. Survival manuals help students learn the ropes. Some free u's initiate course evaluation booklets and mimeograph lecture notes. One coordinates a Student Advice Center:

> Due to the work overload on regular counselors, students are available daily to advise their fellow students. Come to the Student Advice Center and get help from someone who knows what's happening at the gut-level.
>
> —Experimental College, City College of San Francisco, California

A few free u's have courses in learning techniques for people below the college level. Some offer remedial reading, preparation for the high school equivalency examination, and tutoring. Others run teacher workshops and form task forces to improve the schools.

Free u's could have much more impact on education than they do. The open forum approach with casual support of educational reforms and alternatives is not enough. It usually results in a lot of talk. Occasionally enough enthusiasm is generated to form a new school. Some of these schools fold after a couple months due to the fluctuating commitments of their originators, an insufficient student market, and lack of funds. The free u itself makes little impact on the formal educational institutions in a community. But the spin-offs of free u classes, parents and teachers groups who want change, continue independently to work for reforms in the public schools.

HOME SKILLS

Natural, non-chemical, organic, and back to the land describe many free u courses. The focus is away from supermarkets to gardens, away from nuclear families to extended families, away from competition to cooperation.

Forming urban and rural communes, growing vegetables on dormitory roofs, baking bread, winemaking, blue jean embroidery, and the techniques of natural childbirth are all taught in free u's. There are courses on new or uncommon eating patterns and food preparations such as the value of health foods, yogurt making, macrobiotic cooking (I, II, and III), organically grown foods, biotrophy, vegetarianism, and herbs. Not all are so basic, however. More exotic courses in French cuisine, pastry, wok cookery, the galloping gourmet (New Zealand style), cooking for frightened males, Jewish cooking, exploratory cooking, campfire cooking, and

cheap vegetable cooking find students. Learning to grow your own food was most popular. Some free u students grew organic gardens on state owned campus land. Their plots got as large as several acres.

Some courses such as natural childbirth and birth control are offered at campus free u's because the regular university does not provide enough information about them. These are led often by campus or local doctors; often they are simple "show 'n tell" roundtable group discussions. The University for Man (Kansas), for example, has weekly group meetings on breast feeding, pain relief (anesthetics, hypnosis, drugs, acupuncture), gestalt therapy, biofeedback for voluntary control, weight control, and the Lamaze method of childbirth.

Partly because of information sessions such as these and partly because of the informal casual life style represented by many free u people, some free u's have gained a reputation as advocates of "permissive sex without any regard for our values concerning morality (and) the sacred institution of marriage."[1] As a statement about the people who are involved in free u's, this opinion lacks depth. It ignores the integrity of most of the people involved. Many seek new ways to practice the traditional values of love, trust, sharing, and understanding of one person for another. As for the sacred institution of marriage, free u's do not value the institution as much as the quality of the relationship between two people. Because of the abuses and shortcomings of certain institutions, free u's try other things. Marriage, religion, and education are some of the institutions challenged by the free u.

Free u's attract people who seek new relationships and who want to experiment with new behaviors. For example, in 1971 ten free u's helped people forming communes meet others who might want to join. Several free u's ran commune matching services to connect people who want a new living experience with appropriate places. This is how they start:

> Families in Community: Families are nice, but a little lonely and isolated. We would like to talk with other families about living together communally. Here are some of the issues we think might come up: raising and educating kids; buying land and building on it; the common work of a community; the problem of those who wish to live communally, but do not wish to give up urban ties—such as jobs; the balance between independence and sharing; sexual freedom in relation to community stability; drugs on communes; methods for solving interpersonal problems; methods of sharing wealth. We are not experts in community—only a family who feels limited by the nuclear family unit. We are using this discussion group as a way of contacting other families who feel the same way.
>
> —Free University of Berkeley, California

[1] This accusation was made in a letter to *The Free You*, the magazine put out by Midpeninsula Free University, March 1969.

The free university acts as the middleman to put people in touch with others. Sometimes families, groups, and individuals meet weekly for many months before they decide whether or not to form a commune or living community. In one case, a group of eight to fifteen people met at least once a week for eight months before deciding that they had resolved the basic questions and wanted to form a commune. At that point, they started looking for a place to live. The whole plan fell apart because they could not find a suitable house. One basic requirement was that each person have a private space. A house big enough for ten private spaces with common space left over could not be located at that time.

Many students today want to know more about the home skills. Students raised on frozen peas and packaged meats do not even know what a pea pod looks like. The free u replaces opening a package with growing your own, getting shot up by a miracle drug with natural childbirth exercises to understand and cope with the pain of childbirth, the sewing machine with embroidery, and the apartment and dormitory physical space with the cooperative or communal living space.

LANGUAGES

Free u language courses range from Spanish and French to Armenian and Hausa. In 1971, 27 different languages were offered in 82 free u's. Most are crash courses, given by foreign born people, graduate students who want to retain their fluency, or Peace Corps returnees. Spanish and French are the most popular, followed by Russian and German. Also taught are Chinese, Portuguese, Egyptian Hieroglyphics (two free u's), Greek, Hebrew, Cherokee, Tibetan, Slovenian, Urdu, Armenian, and Hausa (a language of northern Nigeria). Language courses meet more frequently than many free u courses. Instructors are often pleased with the three to seven people per course who finally settle in to a serious language study.

Several factors account for the success of language study at free u's (as opposed to other academic courses). There is less room for ambiguity in language courses. Students quickly begin learning what they want to know. They usually understand that in order to reach their goals, certain basic skills must be mastered. In other courses, particularly theoretical ones, there is a lot more ambiguity, confusion, and often disappointment.

MUSIC

What sounds emanate from the free university? Free u brochures bring together many different people including stringed instrumentalists, madrigal singers, guitarists, Renaissance musicians, polyphonic singers, electronic musicians, jug band kazoos, and percussion and wooden instrumentalists. Twenty-five "jam" groups formed at 16 free u's in 1971.

Rarely were they "into" classical music although two free u's formed groups to listen to chamber music and opera. More popular were The Rolling Stones, folk, rock, and country music, the blues, jazz, and bluegrass.

> Bluegrass music has been forced underground by the Country Politan Muzak radio stations. Yet it flourishes at the grass roots level . . . Bill Monroe and His Bluegrass Boys, Charlie Monroe and the Kentucky Pardners, Reno and Smiley and the Tennessee Cut-Ups, Ralph and Carter Stanley and the Clinch Mt. Boys, the Dillards, the Osbornes, and the Blue Velvet Band.
>
> —Community Free School, Colorado

The most popular music course continues to be guitar instruction. Sometimes over 60 people enroll for these courses. That creates some disappointments. One guitar instructor told me:

> I really voluntecred to organize this group because I wanted to learn too. But most people who show up don't know much about guitar. There's one person who is better, but the class is so big (26 people) that we have to cut it into two groups, with each of us leading one. The other person and I have met a couple times at the end, and we are talking about getting together with a couple others to form a group. So I guess it's worked out okay.

Besides guitar, there are also lessons on how to play the recorder, blues harp, piano, bluegrass banjo, blues harmonica, violin and viola, and organ ("Tickling the Ivories").

SPORTS

Sports are not too popular in the free u's, but recreational pursuits often appear because people who do them alone want to do them with others. Free u's offer akido and judo as well as outdoor skills of backpacking, rock climbing, wilderness survival, basic seamanship, and mountaineering.

> Five outings have been arranged to be conducted in conjunction with the Sierra Club for those people in the class. The course will begin with an introduction to the mountain environment (and ways to preserve it) and will conclude with safety and survival techniques (ways to preserve you).
>
> —Experimental College, California State University at Long Beach

Free u's also sponsor less rugged sports: tennis, frisbee, rocketry, sailing, Go, chess, jogging, water safety instructions, free u football, and basketball. Invisible University (North Carolina) has a "Centipede Basketball Team," in which all participants are instructed to bring their own equipment. To the best of my knowledge, no national free university athletic association (NFUAA) has developed.

An unusual outing group is "Volunteers of the Zoo":

> What started as a simple class on building environments at the zoo has grown into an organization of more than fifty members. We have learned a lot about

animals, building environments, and politics at the Zoo. When you join us you will find that there is no teacher but rather a chance to work with other people who may know something you don't and an opportunity to share your experience and energy. We have found that we cannot handle more than five new people a month unless some of those joining can move into a teaching role. fairly quickly. If you have skills such as welding, carpentry, zoology, graphics production or other special knowledge please identify yourself as "skilled" when signing up for the class.

Jay Beckwith started the course because he felt that zoo animals needed better living environments. He couldn't do much alone so he went to the local free university, Heliotrope (California), and advertised that he wanted to organize a class. The $7 fee paid by class members pays for the materials and tools used. Since the fall of 1970 the group has constructed new play environments for about 30 animal cages. One Sunday morning while group members were building a new cage environment for Sally the gorilla, Jay said:

"I could probably tell people what they're doing wrong. But it wouldn't be a learning experience for everybody. I view what happens as a choreographed dance, an Ann Halprin dance. Everyone is given their own set of instructions, and you dance without knowing what the end result will be. It just sort of works out."

And if it doesn't work? "We take the responsibility for it Twice cages have broken and we've come back in the middle of the week and fixed them."[2]

TRADES

Since trade skills (carpentry, mechanical repair, legal matters) are so much a part of everyday living, they are frequently taught in the free u's. Two out of three free u's have at least one course in a trade skill. Most popular are courses in mechanical repair: how to fix your Volkswagen, bicycle repair, motorcycle tune-ups, TV repair. There are several courses in electronics for the layman. Upholstering is taught by a licensed crafts man. Medical first aid treats animals as well as human beings. Radio broadcasting and certified flight instruction are available. Carpentry courses include house building, making scale models, a construction workers' cooperative, and dome creation (given at ten free u's):

Alternative Structures: We intend to build a number of ecologically sound structures (domes, spaceframes, tepees, etc). We are interested in experimenting with cheaper and less wasteful forms of construction. We don't know how far this will go but with the rising cost of housing in the Manhattan area we are forced to seek alternatives It will be a cooperative effort, sharing ideas, materials, and labor.

—University of Man, Kansas

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2 Helene Lippincott, *San Francisco Examiner and Chronicle, California Living Magazine*. 2/6/72.

Lawyers offer courses on practical law for the layman, tenants' rights, women and the law, consumer rights, criminal justice, drug law, the rights of students, legal first aid, how to get your own divorce (but not how to get married) and "How to Arrange a Funeral":

> "It is legal and practical for people to have the kind of funeral they want. You can make the casket and carry out the entire funeral yourself if you want. A funeral director is not required. There are some problems, like if you want to bury the body on your land or scatter the ashes yourself, but these can usually be worked out. We will discuss all these things
>
> —Free University of Berkeley, California

In the summer of 1972, Communiversity (Missouri), cooperating with the local National Lawyers Guild, held six courses "which we hope will soon develop into a 'Peoples Law School.'" The courses are for people who want to know something about the laws that affect their daily living but who do not want to enroll in a three-year law school. They include courses on prison rights, researching the law, drug law, municipal court law, consumer advocacy in the law, and tenant rights-landlord responsibilities.

Chapter twelve
awareness courses

The last chapter described some of the skills people need to establish different life-styles — baking, farming, building their own structures, and cooperatively providing for their own needs. But people cannot begin to create new kinds of homes and communities without first learning who they are, who they want to be, and how to go about becoming. This section on awareness courses describes the many "head trips" created by people who want to lessen inner conflict and make their own lives more actively creative.

INDIVIDUAL AWARENESS

Most free u's extend learning from the cognitive to the affective domain by sponsoring at least one encounter/sensitivity group. Seventy percent offer at least one encounter group to help individuals learn more about themselves, their relationship to their work, and the nature of interpersonal behavior. Usually, these groups aim for self-understanding and acceptance through the expression of honest feelings which lead to individual development and group growth.

Some free u's allow only highly trained persons to direct these groups; other free u's have leaderless groups or groups led by people who feel they have enough experience and insight to contribute to a productive group experience. Most are directed by people with some qualifications: psychiatrists, experienced counselors and social workers, instructors in human relations institutes, and ministers.

Methods used in these groups range from lectures to sociodrama, transactional analysis, gestalt therapy, and immersion in total environments:

> Encounter: Southside Manhattan: Do you really want to learn what it's like to be a disadvantaged kid? Let's get out of the theory books and interact with the people who live there. This summer young people who live South of Poyntz will present a class that will attempt to bring to life the conditions of the disadvantaged youth in Manhattan. Come to where we live.
>
> —University for Man, Kansas

Sometimes these courses take a different approach to more traditional

academic subjects. "Poetry Encounter" is one example of an academic course, creative writing, approached from another angle:

> Each semester I became more dissatisfied with the traditional approach—analyzing and criticizing poems, trying to find ways of improving them. I decided that there were ways of bringing more life, energy, and incentive into the teaching of creative writing, and of accelerating the process by which poets learn to write better poems.[1]

So James Spencer, the course organizer, tried something else:

> When we find that the poem cannot tell us something about the poet that we want to know, we turn to the poet and use the upfront interchange of encounter techniques. . . . In an encounter meeting it is possible for the group to sense not only more than a single individual can usually sense alone, but more about the person than he can admit about himself. It probably has something to do with the fact that we are all sensitive to a slightly different spectrum of cues. What some miss, others see. The group quickly pools its insight, and a superconsciousness emerges.[2]

The objective is to help the poet identify his real feelings and express these coherently in poetry.

Group experiences vary widely. Some are deeply personal, introspective revelations and resolutions of personal feelings and conflicts. Others, like the public speaking workshops, focus on more superficial personal improvements.

Free u's have certainly been in the forefront of the trend toward expression of honest feelings, more egalitarian relationships between individuals, and insistence on understanding why people do things rather than simply accepting without knowing why. This emphasis has left the free university with its most enduring reputation as the mecca for the touchie-feelies.

Perhaps because of this reputation free u course organizers often emphasize the educational, as opposed to therapeutic, value of their group so that people needing intensive, individual personality treatment will not see the free u group as a psychiatric substitute. For example, a divorce workshop stresses its educational rather than therapeutic intentions:

> Divorce Workshop: This group will experiment with various encounter and awareness techniques in an effort to increase our sensitivity to ourselves and others, to experience, to open ourselves to intimacy, to learn to be good to and for ourselves. We will seek to improve our relations with others and explore ways to increase our self-liking and self-acceptance. We hope to learn how to be more honest and open with ourselves and in our relations with other people. This is NOT a therapy group—it is a learning experience.
>
> —University for Man, Kansas

[1] James Spencer. *The Free You*, December 1969

[2] *Ibid.*

I doubt whether the separation between education and therapy can be made clearly. Both reveal to the individual what he didn't understand previously. But the conflict between therapy, often deprecated as "coddling the students," and education continues. To purists, an academic education concerns itself only with intellectual development; what students do outside the classroom is not the business of the university. But for most, the separation between living and learning is more a matter of degree and the question is not *whether* but *how extensively* educators should become involved with the nonacademic environments of their students. Some research indicates that by dealing with noncognitive aspects of student development, by providing richer living-learning environments, teachers have improved a student's academic involvement. Certainly when people have many personal conflicts, it is harder for them to turn their attention to academic pursuits.

If the distinction is made between therapy as a concern for the "whole" person and education as more narrowly limited to the cognitive faculties, then free u's are more therapeutic than traditional u's. But free u's explicity counter these artificial separations. The Preamble of Midpeninsula Free University, one of the first free u's, states that "education which has no consequences for social action or personal growth is empty."

The experience of empty education rather than personal growth has been so pervasive that some free u's contrast "academic" with "active." On an evaluation form, Communiversity (Missouri) asks its course organizers, "Has your course lent itself to active experiences or have the dynamics of the class been mostly academic?" The separation of learning from self-discovery and education from liberation is not made by the free university. Awareness groups, in particular, do not separate what is learned and how it is learned from the resulting impact on the individual.

LIBERATION

Women's lib. Gay lib. Gray lib. Men's lib. Kid's lib. Everyone's liberation! What does it mean? It means a chance for everyone — women, men, homosexuals and transexuals, old and young people — to meet together, to learn more about themselves and to become what they want without feeling isolated. Women's liberation groups often allow women the one night out without the kids; they also provide a chance to discuss something other than baby diapers or bathroom cleaners. For older women, these groups offer encouragement and contacts to reenter the job market. Liberation groups provide a chance to discuss ideas, opportunities, literature, history, and feelings which are seldom expressed elsewhere.

Free u's are usually the first places in the community to shelter neophyte liberation groups. Campus-based free u's serve as the link between rela-

tively clandestine off-campus individuals (who may coalesce to form a group such as the Gay Liberation Front) and the campus community. In this case, the free u advertises and provides the meeting space for discussion of common problems and needs. As these groups grow in size, they usually become independent. They form campus and community clubs. Some free u liberation courses are later adopted as university credit courses. Others continue to grow off campus. Free u's often act as a barometer to measure the extent of student interest and available resources for such courses before they officially become part of the university curriculum. At San Diego State College, the 12 students taking a women's liberation course in the Experimental College wanted to extend that opportunity to more students. Out of this developed an independent center for women's studies which offers credit courses focusing on historical, cultural, and societal issues of particular relevance to women taught by faculty members from various departments. Off-campus projects of the independent center include creating a storefront in the community for information on birth control, abortion and personal counseling, and a Feminist Free-You which opened in July 1972.

Most transitions are less well organized and plagued by trivial hang-ups. For example, at the University of New Mexico, the sociology department agreed to offer the same course which originated in the free u, but its title was changed from "Homosexuality" to the less charged one of "Non-Heterosexuality." While sex, liberation, and homosexuality are now openly discussed, values have not changed as much as the tone in which they are uttered. When these courses are offered in the free u's, some people still get outraged.

Even within free u's, liberation is often more apparent than actual. These enrollment figures from the Community Free School (Colorado) make some points:

Table 10. Community Free School enrollments by sex and course

	Enrollment	
Course	*Male*	*Female*
Modern Dance	3	8
Swedish Massage	4	11
Vegetarian Cooking	2	6
Macrobiotics	0	7
Go	4	0
Carpentry	8	0
Pottery	0	9
VW Mechanics	10	2
Knitting	1	8
Weaving	1	31
Macrame	2	34

Even where there are no grades or requirements, where men are encouraged to take cooking and women are encouraged to be self-sufficient, where the vanguard of the new culture hangs out, women take sewing and men fix cars. And it looks like it will remain that way for a while yet.

MYSTICISM AND THE OCCULT

> The Age of Reason: There are ten times as many American college students enrolled in astrology courses as in astrophysics courses.[3]

Free u's reflect the growing popularity of little known areas. Several times this year, my own introduction to free u people was prefaced by the construction of a natal chart. (The chart stayed the same but the different interpretations delighted me with a new self many times.)

Occult groups explore the unknown, the spiritual, surprise through magic, and religious rites of witchcraft. Charts are erected, palms read, clairvoyant powers demonstrated. One course, which was reported by a local newscaster and eventually broadcast nationally by Jim Harvey, was a course in witchcraft at Denver Free University:

> Introduction to Witchcraft I: We will talk about Witch Wisdom and demonstrate it. There is a $10.90 surcharge to cover bat's blood and other ingredients for the cauldron. The class is not intended for persons who want to become witches, or witches who want to join covens in the Denver area. Such persons should enroll in Introduction to Witchcraft II.
>
> —Denver Free University, Colorado

RELIGION

Many people, especially the young, lack the comfort of having faith in anything. They don't believe in God or the church. They cannot find any world order. Parental and older role models too often turn out to be fraudulent. Destruction and control eclipse creation and individual faith. How can one alleviate the personal anguish that comes from victimization in indifferent or hostile surroundings? Too often traditional institutions reject these issues as inappropriate: colleges do not support the search for individual faith; formal western religions have failed too many. The restlessness of youth — call it mobility, indecision, or simply adolescence — sometimes alights on something which seems so pure at the time that it is embraced completely. It fills some need for security, safety, and calm. The result may be to eliminate all questions because of the pain they bring. Some of these youths are seen on street corners and in bus stations wearing ritual garb, sacrificing themselves to another order, proseletyzing for converts.

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[3] Yale physicist D. Allan Bromley, *Time*, January 3, 1972.

Free u's put people groping for some belief in touch with one another. Religious groups at free u's (53 during the '71 term) seldom focus on western religious values. Eastern religions predominate: Buddhism, Islamic ethics, Bhagavad Gita, Krishna consciousness, Taoism, and Bahai. The courses which do focus on the western religions are not the usual ones:

> What Do You Want with Us, Jesus?: A Free-wheeling seminar series with ecumenical Jesus fanatics (churchmen) concerned about God, Jesus and Man's search for meaning.
>
> —University for Man, Kansas

Other courses include "Recordings of the Sages," "The Apocalypse," "Teilhard de Chardin," "Campus Crusade for Christ," "Sufism (Getting High on God)," and one "For Jesus Fanatics."

Some theologians have found hope in this new interest in religion, however unorthodox. They believe the sequel to the "Jesus Freak" may be the "Jesus Follower:" "The world can at least identify these professing Christians by their radiance, a characteristic that they are determined to match with a spontaneous love."[4] I am not so sure after listening to serious clashes between differing sects. Often the dogmatism of the new order replaces that of the old.

UNIVERSITY-COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Awareness and encounter groups are not limited to individual growth and understanding. Campus free u's help arrange dialogs between groups that do not always talk to or understand each other: students and administrators, citizens and policemen, young and old people. Prominent officials (mayors, city councilmen, university presidents) sometimes take part and use these weekly meetings to sound out problems before they become too large and to get the opinion of different constituencies for planning a new program or project. At California State University at San Jose a campus patrolman organized a discussion group called "The Police and You." The free university at the University of Missouri (Kansas City) planned "Rapping with the Establishment" in which students met with various university officials. The vice president for student affairs at Florida State University led a free u course in "Administrative Life Styles." A group called the "Alumni Boosters" at the Experimental College at California State University at Long Beach keeps a "critical watch" on the college. The president of the University of Maine (Orono) led a free university group called "The University."

> I would like to talk about the university's structure, relationship with the community and state, policies, or wherever the discussions lead. I hope that through

[4] *Christianity Today*, 16:33-4. October 22, 1971.

these meetings we can foster a better understanding of the university, and perhaps find some viable solutions to the problems that are facing us.
—Abenaki Experimental College, Maine

Other groups provide services for a scattered alternate community. They develop crises and counseling referral services, food co-ops, and free clinics. Often free u's do not sponsor new groups, but they encourage people to use other community organizations. Many free u catalogs include descriptions of local organizations such as runaway houses, Alcoholics Anonymous clubs, free schools, and adult schools. This free advertising encourages better use of resources and better free u relations with the larger community.

YOGA

The most popular free u course is yoga. In one semester, there were 71 different yoga courses offered at 38 free u's (59 percent of all free u's). Most were hatha yoga, the improvement of the body through exercise. Some courses in kundalini yoga, the branch of yoga which "blends physical, mental and spiritual into one," were also offered. Individual yoga classes are often oversubscribed. Some split into sections so that groups can work better. They meet in facilities ranging from gymnasiums to lofts, living rooms, basements, and dormitory lounges.

Yoga is another example of a free u course which has become a credit course in some universities. Often, it is an option given through the department of physical education; sometimes philosophy departments sponsor yoga classes which unite the bodily exercises with the spiritual elements. Once the free u demonstrates that yoga is feasible (there is enough interest to make the course financially possible), universities and adult education programs include it in their regular curricula.

Chapter thirteen
academic courses

Academic courses are not technical courses, at least in the how-to manual sense. They deal with ideas rather than instruments. They are the kinds of courses that are usually considered a part of liberal arts programs. Some cover the same subjects found in the skills and awareness areas (for example, arts and religion) in a different way. Groups often analyse several viewpoints, read from many sources, take field trips, do research, discuss and argue about interpretations. They may break off later from the free u to form action groups. But they start out to study rather than to act.

ARTS

Six ou of ten free u's offer at least one academic arts course. Some courses are the typical broad surveys: "Western Art and Music," "History of Art," "Experimental Film." Others immerse participants in new ways of looking at familiar forms: "Super Hero Comics," "Contemporary Underground Music," "Theatre of the Grotesque."

Most of these courses are not commonly found in regular college and university curricula. Those that are usually treat the subject matter quite differently. Some intermix the disciplines: for example, "Music as Poetry," "Western Art and Music." In traditional universities it's often difficult to get departments to cooperate for such interdisciplinary courses.

Some subjects are not traditionally considered academic, so few faculty members feel capable enough to teach them. Practitioners often teach these courses. One example is the "American Film Industry," which is taught by people making and showing films. Other subjects could be considered "avant-academic." They are too young to have a commonly accepted body of appropriate courses or experts required for academic worthiness. "Contemporary Underground Music," "Jimi Hendrix," "Theatre of the Grotesque," "20th Century Aesthetics" and "Computer Art" are examples of courses taught first in the free u.

ECONOMICS

Free u economic theory centers around the history of labor union economics and proletarian economies, as well as other kinds of economic

systems based on cooperation rather than competition. In 1971 there were 25 courses in economic theory offered at 17 free universities. They were more frequently offered at independent free u's than at campus-based free u's where students could take them as regular college courses. There are courses in "Twentieth Century Labor Economics," "Economics for a Counter Culture," "Economics of Communist Countries," "Organized Labor and International Economics," and "Social Economics." There are also several standard courses on "Insurance History and Problems," "Economic Theory," and "Public Finance." Most though are oriented toward understanding economies that differ from "establishment economics" or from capitalistic values.

EDUCATION

Free u education courses differ from those offered in university departments of education in their focus on contemporary educational problems and alternatives to public schools. Courses concerned with progressive schooling, experimental education, educational revolution, and change in the public schools were offered in 30 free universities. Typically these groups looked at nonpublic schooling in their communities or included texts by Maria Montessori, John Holt, George Dennison, Paul Goodman, and Charles Silberman *(Crisis in the Classroom)*.

There were a few courses dealing with specific education problems such as "Language Acquisition in Early Childhood," "Education for Exceptional Children." However, most were concerned with philosophies and descriptions of radical educational reform.

> Alternatives to Conventional Schools: We hope to explore the problems of making American education responsive to individuals and of allowing these individuals to become self-starting learners, able to pursue any interests which they develop. We will concentrate on the free school idea and models provided by British Primary Schools. Conveners: Staffs of New School and John Locke School.
>
> —Free University, University of Arkansas

ENVIRONMENT

Half of the free universities had at least one course in the preservation and improvement of the environment. Some of the courses offered were "Imposing Peace on Technology," "Overpopulation," "Marine Preservation," "Consumer Ecology at Home," "Architecture for Aesthetics," "Recycling Receiving Center." Most free u's have at least one ecology course like this:

> The study and discussion of various aspects of the ecological crises, including

pesticides, recycling, air pollution, organic gardening, population control and personal impact on the environment. The goal will be action on solutions.

—Experimental College, California State University at Northridge

One of the first "Eco-Action" groups started at the Free University of Berkeley. Now, in addition to eco-action groups, several free universities have started recycling receiving centers and environmental awareness projects. Students are reading Buckminster Fuller, practicing environmental gaming, and building geodesic domes. The Free University of Indianapolis is focusing on the inner city:

Ecology—The Greening of Indianapolis: A project for those who are interested in planning and participating in the conversion of vacant inner-city lots into productive neighborhood gardens.

—Free University, Indiana

On the other hand, the Free University of Berkeley is looking off-shore:

Marine Preservation: A Study of present San Francisco Bay marine life . . . A direct action approach to the problem of pollution. For those interested, a chance for continued experimentation which may help restore a prolific and stable marine community to the San Francisco Bay.

—Free University of Berkeley, California

Free u's primarily help young ecology groups by furnishing resources. After that, these groups usually gain enough support to become independent organizations. Academic courses in the environment often quickly agree upon objectives and turn into action groups.

LITERATURE AND POETRY

Fifty-six percent of the free universities have at least one literature course. Most popular are science fiction and the comics. Thirteen free universities offered courses in science fiction:

We intend to explore major works of science fiction such as Blish's "A Case of Conscience," Guin's "Left Hand of Darkness," Miller's "Canticle for Leibowitz." and Vonnegut's "Sirens of Titan" and "Einstein Intersection."

—Experimental University, University of Virginia

There were six free university courses on the comics. They included "How to Read Comic Books," "How to Create Comics," and "Comics, Comix, and Comedy":

Purpose: to enjoy comic strips. comic books and visual humor in general by gaining greater understanding of the art form. We will examine the history of comic art in America. and analyze examples in order to find out what's so funny and why. By studying the forms and techniques of humor we will, hopefully, be able to appreciate good comedy more fully.

Class members will be encouraged to write original jokes and humourous mate-

rial, thus learning by doing. We will spend most of our time looking at funny pictures, laughing, then figuring out why we laughed, and then laughing some [redacted] . . .

—Heliotrope, California

These topics are seldom taught in regular universities. The high degree of interest in them reflects a generation raised on visual stimulants and fantasy. How many academicians are products of this culture? Not many graduate programs (that I know of) include the comics and science fiction as part of the professional training for a literary academician. So free universities are now including these courses until they become a part of regular university curricula.

Other contemporary interests show up first in the free university: "Contemporary Poetry 1950 to the Present," "Underground Press," "Hobbitlore," "Restroom Graffiti," "Literature of Southeast Asia," "Kahlil Gibran," "The Primal Scream," "Literature of the Revolution," and "The Jew in Modern American Literature." There are also groups meeting to discuss "Black American Poetry," "Existentialism in Japanese Literature," "Feminist Themes in Literature," "Utopian Novels and Socialism," "Children's Literature," "Hispanic American Novel," and "French Folktales, Stories and Jokes." Just as a listing of the ten most popular books on college campuses gives some insight into the current interests of people who buy books in college bookstores (usually students), free universities reflect the current fascinations of their own community.

Free universities fill in where universities and colleges leave off. Sometimes this means offering the same courses to a broader audience. Other times it may mean including topics which standard higher education would be less likely to offer at the time. It is ironic that interdepartmental and interdisciplinary courses are currently being hailed as an "innovation in higher education." For eight years free u's have offered courses such as "The Novel and the Film" taught by academicians who could not offer them in the university or by professionals (cartoonists, film directors, scientists) and students.

PHILOSOPHY

Thirty-six standard philosophy courses were offered in 26 (41 percent) free universities. They included "Oriental Philosophy," "Philosophy of Liberation," "Principles of Humanity," "Ethics," "Spinoza," "Birth to Death," "Plato's Republic," "Ways of Knowing," "Whitehead's Metaphysics," "World Faith," "Reason vs. Emotion," "Hegel," "Philosophy of Personality," and a "Seminar in Silence." A sample philosophy course is:

> Philosophy, Politics and Liberation: Free wheeling discussions of current topics such as Tom Wolfe on Radical Chic, Eldridge Cleaver on the "revolutionary

bust" of Tim Leary, Herbert Marcuse on encounter groups, etc. This may also serve on occasion as a continuation of moral, philosophical and political themes not adequately explored in some of my regular classes. Membership in the latter, however, is not necessary Knowledgeable people of all sorts, even other faculty, will be invited to join us on a regular basis. Readings will be suggested from current books and periodicals. Good flicks, art and topics from pop cult may also be discussed, hopefully insofar as they bear on our overall theme of politics and liberation.

—Experimental College, California State University at Fullerton

Philosophy courses often met infrequently, did not accomplish the goals the instructors had expected, and generally disappointed those people involved. "We couldn't get a stable group," or "students weren't serious," or "I had other things to do and we couldn't get together on a common meeting time," or "they just wanted to have a bull session, to rap; that's not what I had in mind" were some of the instructors' comments.

POLITICAL THEORY

Three typical free u courses in political theory are:

A New Political Philosophy: Are Blame and Reprisal Obsolete? The seminar's purpose is to examine a controversial question: are blame and reprisal obsolete? The tendency to respond to the political conflict only by establishing guilt and determining punishment deflects us from the central issues. The solutions to such problems as war, greed, mechanization, depersonalization, and pollution may have continued to elude us because we too often approach them in terms of blame and reprisal.

—Experimental College, California State University at Long Beach

Urban Counter Urgency—Who the Enemies Are and How to Stop Them: The course deals with the attack on the cities and urban areas by revolutionaries (right and left). These are the people who wish to alter the system by extralegal means. Violence or revolution?

—Experimental College, California State University at Los Angeles

Thoughts on American Socialist Revolution: Through readings and through discussion, we will explore the mass movement of today: the anti-war, women's lib, GI's, black and Chicano liberation movements. All of the movements that will build the third American revolution will be analysed and explained. We will have speakers.

—Communiversity, Missouri

The subject of free u courses in political theory is changing the system rather than explaining how current structures operate. There are only a few courses on the structure of government or democracy but many on "Theories of Revolutionary Organization," "The New Left and America," "Radical Movements of the 30's," and "Nonviolence." There were 14

courses on "Marxism-Leninism." These courses correspond to the economic theory courses for alternate cultures and proletarian societies.

Frequently, groups discuss repressed people--political prisoners, homosexuals, and minority groups such as Mexican Americans and blacks:

> El Movemento: This will cover the history of the Mexican American with less emphasis on revolutions and more about people. There will be a section concerning the La Raza Movement and other activities: Cesar Chavez, Gonzales, etc. The format will consist of speakers, a few films and discussions.
>
> —Nebraska Free University

Local clergy often lead groups in "White Racism" and "Black-White Encounter."

The few international relations courses center on United States—Middle East policies. Other groups discuss "Latin American Revolutions," "Red China," "Soviet Affairs 1917 to the Present," "The History of India," and "Indo-China Imperialism." Vancouver Free University (Canada) had one course on Canadian-U. S. relations ("Canada as Subordinate Spouse") and other courses on internal problems ("Power Struggles in British Columbia," "Power Struggles in Quebec," "Canadian Imperialism").

Campus free u's are more likely than independent free universities to have courses in radical politics. Either the traditional university is slow to provide these courses for the students or college students are more interested than community people in radical political subjects.

Political courses in free u's seldom deal with conservative political thought. There was only one course, "Studies in Conservatism," which could be considered on the right-hand side of the political spectrum. Realizing this default, the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) sent a memorandum to campus chapters in February 1970:

> Black studies, Indian studies, socialist and communist studies, and a myriad more are ringing the ears of our college administrators and students. Demands, demands, demands. Isn't it about time that the conservatives offer meaningful and purposeful suggestions as to the creation of Conservative Studies Programs and the institution, if all else fails, of free university courses on conservatism?

Attached to this memorandum was a listing of specific course suggestions which included "Introduction to Modern Conservatism," "Conservative Thought in America," "Libertarian Philosophy," "Economics of the Free Society," "Classical Liberal Economic Theory," and "Conservative Political Philosophy." Each course description was accompanied by a list of readings and texts.

That these never became ongoing free university courses is probably due to the differing natures of conservatism and liberalism-radicalism. Conservatives find the free university too changeable, irresponsible, un-

stable, and undisciplined. Traditionalists charge that it undermines legitimate institutions. Radicals by contrast have little respect for the traditional and feel that establishment institutions and people have no "inherent rights" to the authority they wield over others. Caught in the middle, many free u's try to appear "neutral" in the eyes of the community—a position that is antithetical to the nature, process, and background of the free university.

PSYCHOLOGY

As could be expected, in the free u experimental psychology gives way to "Reuben plus Masters and Johnson." Certain kinds of behavioral counseling are popular (psychodrama, sociodrama, sexodrama, roles people play, transactional analysis). Course titles and descriptions are lively and colorful but the substance sometimes turns out to be similar to academic courses. "Radical Theories of Personality" looks like the standard theory of personality and "Psychology of Revolution" is a study of Fanon and Brown.

But to equate these courses with those of the traditional university would be inaccurate. Free u psychology courses are seldom limited to classroom lectures. Often they include field trips to nearby mental health facilities. The child psych course visits preschools instead of memorizing texts. "Racism in America" reviews the Eisenhower Commission Report, goes into the community to look at real situations, and plans black-white encounter sessions to make problems as personal as possible. In free u's academic sources are supplemented with learning through direct experience.

RELIGION

Courses in religious theory are often stimulated by local campus ministries to encourage student participation in some form of religious study. Around the country, there are "Jewish Free Universities" often run by local Hillels to encourage students to learn and participate in Jewish scholarship. They have not been included in the listings of free universities because their structures are different, teacher qualifications are required, and they center on one theme (Jewish life and scholarship). In effect they are relevant, revitalized Hillel programs.

About half of the free universities have one course in religious theory: Bahai, Islam, Taoism. Biblical study ranges from "John's First Epistle" and "Letters from Paul" to "Jesus Christ Superstar." Religious values include "Christian Conscience," "Christian Existentialism," "Christian Nonviolence" and "Christian Theism." They run the gamut from the almost heretical "Who is Christ Anyway?" to the "Catechism."

SOCIOLOGY

In free universities, the study of human and institutional behavior (sociology) usually deals with new communities, oppressed people, changing conventional stereotypes, helping minority groups, communalism, and the sociology of the counter culture. The variety of these courses can be illustrated best by presenting some:

> Contemporary American Non-thinkers: In an effort to gain a true perspective of the American dream unknown to intellectually-oriented academia, the major works by and of Al Capp, John Wayne, Tarzan, Annette Funicello will be studied. In addition, the *New York Daily News*, *True Confessions*, and *Better Homes and Gardens* will be interjected at random times in order to take the at-the-moment pulse of the nation. The goal of the course will be to paint an accurate image of the true American life style using only red, white and blue crayons.
>
> —Peoples School '71, Missouri

> Swingers, Wife Swappers and Pleasure Seekers: Twenty million single American women and men and married couples have joined a secret society during the sexual revolution of the 60's to exchange and mutually satisfy their sexual needs, desires and pleasures. Hear . . . a series of lectures presented by the past Executive Vice-President and Publisher of one of the nations' foremost Swingers magazines, discuss his 3-year project into the swingers hidden world of sexual pleasure and self-fulfillment. The speaker neither advocates nor condones the swingers movement; the presentation will be given purely on the facts researched.
>
> —Free University, State College, Pennsylvania

> Theology: The Counter Culture and Human Liberation: This course will examine the value system of the cultural revolution by examining rock music, new life styles and radical politics. We will consider this in light of how human liberation is achieved through men and women operating out of a sense of community and purpose. Types of experience will include: an evening of listening [to] and discussing rock music, readings from significant radical politicians, mild encounter group experiences, and a community celebration.
>
> —Denver Free University, Colorado

There are courses that study "Women's Culture and History," "Cultural Conflict in the United States," "White Racism," "Black Nationalism," "Prisons," and the "Sociology of Homosexuals." There are also groups on the "Counter Culture," "Cooperatives," "New Alternatives," "Mexican-American Culture and Problems," "Interdisciplinary Study of Drugs," "Foundations of Marriage," "Researching Community Problems," "Urban Problems," "Obscenity," and "Problems of Artists."

TECHNOLOGY

There is a widespread assumption that free universities are antitechnological. That's not true. Many courses concentrate on the social re-

sponsibilities of scientific advances such as humanizing the computer. One course titled "Technology: Tool or Tyrant?" (Free University of Utah) was organized by a computer science faculty member who attempted to evaluate major technologies in terms of human values. There were 22 courses in 14 free universities which dealt with sophisticated technology. Not surprisingly, the free university at Georgia Institute of Technology has more technological courses than any other. One continuing course, "Project Aquatat," involves the development, construction, and operation of a movable multi-purpose laboratory to study life and phenomena of lakes, ponds, and streams. A course in the "Basic Aspects of Environmental Room Lighting" covers the economic and physiological justification of various illumination levels: glare and reflection, color temperature, and spectrum differences among common light sources. This course is for all "majors who wouldn't find this kind of course in their own curriculum" (Experimental College, University of Southern California).

MISCELLANEOUS

Some of the more interesting courses not included elsewhere in this section are "Molecular Biology Seminars" (Free University, Wisconsin), "Tides and Typhoons," "Organic Chemistry," "Marine Biology," "Robert's Rules of Order," "Math," "Stargazing and Astronomy Weekends," "Food Production for an Uninformed Population," "Meteorology," "Snakes of the World," "Humboldt County History," and "Mass Entertainment 1915 to 1946." There are two courses that especially catch my interest:

> Flight: There is one problem we will attack as equals. What is the macro and microscopic structure of the wings of birds and insects? To what sort of structure does the evolution of the wing lead? What are the simple physical principles? How would you design a flight machine? How does the flight creature perceive his world? The course will have no teacher; we will consult biologists, engineers and so forth as resource personnel.
>
> —Free University of Pennsylvania

> Bug Appreciation or Blasting, Billowing, Bursting Forth with the Power of Ten Billion Butterfly Sneezes: The typical lifespan of a bug; he is screamed at, stamped on, sprayed, trapped, swatted, ignored and generally unappreciated. Come along with us on hikes and be introduced to the world of bugs. There are many brilliant colors, shapes, sizes and sights awaiting you.
>
> —University for Man, Kansas

Chapter Fourteen
Getting it off the ground

In case you missed the warning at the beginning of this book, this is the part you can skip unless you're planning to start a free u yourself, or unless you're curious about how somebody else might start one.

If this warning doesn't put you off, here's another: what follows is very didactic and imperative-sounding. This was by choice. The "do-this-do-that" approach has the advantages of clarity and brevity, two very desirable characteristics of a handbook, which is what this section is — in substance if not in form. The writing of it was prompted by the many requests for advice I received from people interested in launching a free u. A first draft was sent to coordinators at ten free u's, and the changes they suggested have been incorporated.[1]

BACKGROUND WORK

Free u's are usually started by a small number of people: often no more than 3 or 4. They get together, decide that there are things that they want that are not already available, and light on the idea of cooperative learning and sharing to achieve their needs and help create a better community.

If you have gotten the idea of a free u off the ground, try to broaden your contacts as much as possible. Talk with community people to explore the possibilities. Free u's usually do best if they are not limited to one emphasis, for example, political activism or crafts. Try to include religious and political courses as well as crafts. Provide basic skills types of activity along with more theoretical courses. Develop a log of courses and ideas.

Location

If you want your free u to be a campus activity or to be a force to change the curriculum of the college, locate on campus.

[1] Another handbook, a *Mini-Manual for Free Universities*, has been put together by Larry Magid and Nesta King. Unlike this section, it uses the case study method. I recommend it as an additional aid to setting up a free u. You can get it for 50c from the Nebraska Curriculum Development Center, Andrews Hall, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508.

If you are more interested in providing learning for nonstudent community members, plan your initial meetings off campus. Hold them in the midst of the populations you want to affect. Look at the town residential patterns: colleges, high schools, ethnic populations, military forts. Advertise and, if possible, hold meetings, registrations and courses on the home grounds of the target populations.

Name

The name should describe what you're doing and be easy to remember and brief. Try to stay away from "free university" or "experimental college" because these labels often have misleading connotations to the people you are trying hardest to reach. Try to find a name that mirrors your visions. Family Mix, Center for Participant Education, Communiversity are examples of effective names now in use.

Alliances

Free u's located on campus need a congenial space. Find a sponsoring group or become an approved campus organization (see Chapter 15 on Structures). For the first term, it's easier to find a sympathetic sponsor (usually another club or the student association). With a sponsor, you'll have less trouble getting rooms and posting signs.

Off-campus free u's should contact people in other community organizations: "Y" staff, clergy, city councilmen, members of the local board of education, businessmen's clubs. Go to neighborhood recreation centers and speak with people on the local Human Relations Board. Involve older people who can help you approach other city groups. Young people have tried to set up a teen center only to find that parents would not allow their children to go there; when local ministers come up with the same thing, the town often donates the building, the money, and headline publicity.

The more support you have, the more involvement there will be by the community in the free u and the more things you'll be able to do.

Staff, Facilities, and (alas) Money

Aim early to find the money to pay at least one staff member. Most free u's have found that at least one paid staff member is needed for program development and dependability. Set up an office early (your home, desk in the student activities space, community center) with a telephone. Publicize that the telephone will be manned certain hours and that someone will be available to answer all inquiries.

Course Organizers

Usually the course organizers during the first term are friends, friends of friends, and people whom you have approached directly. There is no substitute for direct personal contact. The more people you speak to, and

the more you can encourage them to be creative and try something new, the more people you will involve finally in the free u. Also ask community people what they would like to learn; then try to find an organizer willing to help them learn it. If you can't find an organizer, include the topic in your list of courses without a leader. Arrange for one person to coordinate the initial session in which the group collectively can go about finding an appropriate resource or deciding how members want to learn.

Between Idea and Reality

What happens now? Usually a few people take it upon themselves to make the free u a reality. They determine what's needed to get through the first term and set about getting it: instructors, spaces, and a brochure that's out in time for registration. The deficiency with this method is that it leaves out people who could be useful. Some of the smaller free u's plan public meetings before the beginning of each term.

The purpose of the public meeting is to introduce the free u to the community and to involve as many people as possible. The curriculum is rounded out here by people who volunteer to organize new, hitherto unplanned groups.

Preliminaries: Reserve a Room

Find a church lounge, community center, home, university center, or storefront. Classrooms are not always good places because they further the association with the local schools. The space should hold at least 30 people comfortably.

Advertise the meeting. Notify the newspapers and radio stations early. Supply an information sheet about the formation of the free u, its purposes, who's eligible and how much it costs. Invite people to the initial meeting. Include the time, day, and place of the meeting. Also include your name, address, and telephone number. Put posters in local libraries, town halls, store windows, supermarkets, and on bulletin boards.

Work out a procedures and goals statement. Keep it down to about one page. In it, say why you think a free university is important. How will it work? Include also specific information on how to contact people: address or telephone of the office, when to call or come, your name.

Reserve a registration area. Make tentative arrangements for a place, booth, and hours of operation. Find a central, heavily trafficked location: the mall, lobbies, community center.

Discuss goals and procedures statement. Some people will come to the meeting alone to find out whether they want to be involved. If there are not too many people, introduce yourself, say why you are there, and ask

individuals around the room to do the same. If the group is large, divide it into small groups. Note down any ideas or questions that come to mind; have someone read them off when the group gets back together. Get as many ideas down as possible; try to find people to work on them. This is a time both to collect a lot of new ideas and to broaden the pool of people working with you.

Set up first-term courses. Some people have come to the meeting with the intention of being course coordinators. Before forming the curriculum, explain that expertise is not necessary—only an interest in sharing what you know, can do well, or are merely interested in is important. Resource people need not be authorities. More importantly, they are motivators, joint investigators. Some people, of course, will have a traditional approach to teaching: the native Frenchman who wants to teach the basics of the language, the auto mechanic who is demonstrating how to tune a car. But even here, encourage them to try new ways.

Get and give ample course information. Each instructor should supply the following information: course title; description (make it as interesting and informative as possible); meeting place; limitations (minimum or maximum number of people, facilities, cost of materials); equipment students should buy; coordinator's name, address, and telephone number. If a teacher has no place for the group to meet, help find one. See whether anyone at the meeting could supply facilities for that group.

THE BROCHURE

This is possibly the most creative, intimidating, fun, and hassling job that needs doing at a free u. Unfortunately, too often it should have been done yesterday and there isn't enough time to devote to it. *Seek help.* You'll be amazed at the possibilities for really creative work that can come from a good printer. Go to several printers, tell them what you are doing and ask for ideas and suggestions. If there's a free press in town, go there. Don't be afraid to be stupid: ask every question that you think of. You'll learn about half-tones, pictures, camera-ready copy, making plates, reducing, and paper weight. Campus print shops usually have low rates for campus organizations.

Go talk with people in the art department and crafts shop. The director, who's often an almost-made-it artist, frequently has contacts in town. Get help here too on the format and composition of the brochure. Speak with people on the campus paper. They'll often print your catalog either as a separate page in an upcoming issue or as a separate print-out for distribution. If there's time and willingness, newsprint is one of the cheapest ways to produce copy in large quantities.

Another source of help might be people in the office of public information or public relations office. They are among the most neglected and most creative people on campus. They usually have contacts with local newspapers and printers.

Finally, try the journalism classes. One free u used to have its brochures composed by these classes. It was good experience for the students, and they consistently did a good job.

Type of Brochure

Many people will be turned on or put off just by the cover and design of your brochure. If you print something that looks like the local underground, those people who read the undergrounds will be there. If it looks straight and conservative, you'll get a different kind of person. If you want a cross section, vary the format.

The process makes a difference too. Mimeographing is easiest and cheapest. Avoid it, though, if you have the choice (resources plus time). The chief drawback of mimeo is that it looks like any other announcement for a demonstration. One big free u traced low enrollments one term to a change in its publicity from the poster printout to the mimeographed handout. Mimeo is also hard to work with and much less attractive than other methods of printing. For a little extra you can do better, distinctive, simple brochures.

What to Include

Be sure that each catalog includes: 1) name of the free u; 2) term dates or season and year; 3) registration procedure: when and where (if there's no formal registration, explain that interested persons should call the organizer or the office); 4) when first classes begin; 5) charges: if there are no fees, say so; 6) who can participate; 7) philosophy of the free u; 8) where people can get more information: free u address, telephone, and when someone's there; 9) course information: title, description, organizer, telephone, when and where it meets, and any limit set by the organizer so people will know whether they should hurry up and register; 10) community bulletin board: "The part of our brochure that has brought us some of the greatest rewards has been our community section. This helps projects become known, helps newcomers see what's going on in the community, and lets people see what they can do 'good' with their time."[2] This section usually includes a one-paragraph description of local programs like a food cooperative or free clinic, Alcoholics Anonymous, runaway house, and adult education programs.

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[2] University for Man, Kansas.

Distribution Points

If this sounds picayune, Ron Wolfe of the Denver Free University assures me it is not:

> We could change the whole complexion of the free u just by where we put the catalogs. If we put them in middle class supermarkets we can turn the place into middle class housewives overnight. If we put them in old age homes we can turn the place into a geriatric society. If we put them in nothing but head shops, we can turn the place into a freak institution in one quarter. Once you realize you have this power, what's your responsibility? Where 'should' you distribute catalogs? What's the 'proper' balance? You can't say that you put them in the most likely places. By doing that, you know exactly what the results are going to be. This puts a whole new dimension on your responsibility. 'Letting things happen' is as good as a conscious decision to do what the results would be. By letting it drift, you're making a conscious decision to go in a certain direction.[3]

Prices

Shop around. Visit more than just one print shop. Get friends to lead you to the best and least expensive places. Find out the costs of different processes, paper qualities, and quantities. Before you leave the copy at the printers, get a written estimate of the cost. This does not show distrust; it's good business for both you and the printer.

At Communiversity (Missouri) it's done like this:

> All jobs which cost more than $200 must go out on bids. We write up the bid specifications (size, paper quality, number of folds, etc.), send them to the university purchasing department, and they send it to any printers we request plus about 10 or 15 others. The printers have two weeks to respond. At that time, we must choose the lowest bid or give good reason why we choose a different one. The system is actually very helpful for us and the purchasing department takes care of a lot of the work.[4]

Find out when the printer will have it ready. It's wisest to give the printer as much time as necessary for a good job. Of course, you should have the catalog at least one week before registration dates.

How many copies do you need? The quantity depends on the size of your community. Some free u's in small places print 500 brochures. Larger ones print 15,000. Get as many copies as you can afford and distribute.

Don't forget to ask about folding. Machines can do it much faster and easier than you. It's true that there is a sense of "community" that comes during the folding/collating/stapling process, but can you get it another way?

When the job is finished, celebrate.

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[3] Interview with Ron Wolfe, Denver Free U.

[4] Letter from Alice Lawler, Communiversity, Missouri.

BEFORE THE FIRST CLASSES

Publicity

Brochures are your main advertising technique, but don't stop there. Be sure to write a release and send it to all newspapers. Go to newspaper offices and see whether they are interested in doing a story on the free u. Sometimes disc jockeys will do a 15- or 30-minute interview with you. Try to get on TV talk shows. Sometimes the news media will come out to the registration area and do a news spot for the evening newscasts. Be sure to deposit a one-page description of the free u and the first term brochure at each news office or station. If you can, hand out leaflets during each day of registration.

Registration

People should be able to register by telephone or in person. Before registration starts, make a separate sheet for each course. At the top, list the course title, convener, telephone, meeting place, day, time of meeting, and any changes or additions. In red ink, write down the maximum number of people.

Alphabetize course titles and put them into looseleaf binders — one binder goes next to the telephone, another goes to the registration desk. When people register by telephone, record their names and addresses. Those who register in person can fill in their own personal information. Someone must make sure that courses are not oversubscribed. When the limit is reached, remove registration sheets for that course from the binders and add that course to the listing of courses that are full.

Follow-up

Mail course sheets to organizers. Remind them of their commitment for the first week of the course. Also ask them to notify you if any changes are made (location of the class, time or day change, course discontinued).

FEEDBACK FROM COURSE ORGANIZERS

After registration, most coordinators heave a sigh of relief, but for some, the job is not yet done. If the free university depends on the quality of its group experiences, coordinators ought at least to try to find out how the classes are going: whether people are satisfied, what's happening, and what changes should be made to improve the quality of their experience. Three ways to find out what happens in the groups are to attend the classes yourself, to ask that questionnaires be returned by the instructors and/or students, and to have a mid-term meeting with instructors.

Questionnaires

Some free u's send brief questionnaires to the course organizers midway through the term. Here are some typical inquiries:

- How many people came to the first class?
- How many were at the last class given?
- How many times did the class meet?
- What happened in the group?
- What were your objectives? Were they accomplished? Why? Why not?
- Would you be willing to organize another group next term? If so, describe it.
- Do you know other people who have some talents or interests who could organize a group? If so, contact them yourself or list their names here.
- What was the course format (lecture/discussion, encounter, problem investigation, recreational group experience, individualized study, etc.)?
- What did you do? What was your "role" (authority, learning facilitator, joint investigator, group convener, expert, master mentor, trainer, peer)?
- Could we, the free u organizers, help you in any way? Is there anything that we could have done differently that would have helped your course?

Organizer Meeting

In addition to the questionnaire (or instead of it), some free u's arrange a meeting of course organizers. This can be a picnic or potluck dinner. Such a meeting has advantages over the questionnaires. Often the best suggestions occur when people get together, recognize that they have similar ideas or problems, and have the time to come up with suggestions.

Some instructors will be disappointed either because they had few people enroll, or because students seemed uninterested and dropped out. At this time, try to find someone who can be specifically helpful in the area of teacher and resource development. This is a unique time to help instructors who want to improve their teaching skills. The free u is one of the only places where instructors can experiment without fear of outside repercussions.

NEXT TERM PLANS

Be constantly on the lookout for other people and new kinds of processes. This never stops.

Chapter fifteen
Structures

The language of modern institutions is understood in terms of structure. When people ask, "Who are you?" they usually expect a response in terms of an institutional role: "Mr. T's secretary," "Sol's wife," "Director of the free university." Role titles explain quickly where you fit in a system.

Structures account for little that is real in the daily functioning of a free university. That is to say, problems are not created by faulty structures, nor are they solved by changing these structures. Problems are created by people; they are resolved by addressing the conflicts between the people involved, not by changing the structures.

Final solace:

We advocate facing the realities, quickly, then getting to the business of 'doing' the alternative school; not naively, but realizing that the joyful freedom you want will 'always' be out of context amidst vast details and bureaucratic demands, and you've got to go ahead with what you know you want. Someone, one of your group, will eventually have to deal with a lot of stuff. That doesn't 'have' to be a bummer.[1]

A FEW TIPS ON NUMBERS

If you don't care much about control and just want to help people who want to get together with others, do a network. Don't let that network get above 400 people though because it will take up too much time and resources. It will also tilt toward centralization rather than decentralization; you probably don't want that.

If you do care about the quality and diversity of the experience, want to stimulate the local counter culture, and also want to make some money —at least to pay for the periodic catalogs, the rent, and hopefully some expenses of free u administrators—can you get 500 people each term to pay for the experience? (That means you should be able to get at least 1,000 different people each year, just for security.) With less than 500 people each term, the bills and debts pile up. Higher paid enrollments are okay too; but the more people you have, the more work it is. For

[1] Salli Rasberry and Robert Greenway, *Rasberry Exercises* (California, 1971).

starters more people mean more rooms to arrange, more teachers to find, geometrically expanding the paper work, answering inquiries, scrounging space, meeting deadlines missed two days ago, collecting registration fees, dealing with the authorities, housing people who just have nowhere else to go for the night, wondering what will blow up next that you had nothing to do with, and trying to keep your sanity when all seem to be trying to tell you it's lost. If you aren't too greedy but are energetic, a bit compulsive about details, able to live on $3,500 a year, and capable of attracting good people to an idea that you think can't be bad, you've missed your calling if you are not now doing a corporate free u.

If you're involved in a small free university on a college campus, can't seem to stimulate other people to make them believe that it's as good an idea as you know it is, and just feel generally dragged down by the experience, don't grin 'n bear it, quit. Let the free u die. You're either sustaining an obsolete institution or people don't yet appreciate the worth of the idea. When they do, they'll recreate the new free u and think it was their own idea. That's probably a lot of what free u's are about, a community's creation, rather than sustenance, of a unique new work of art. You're just ahead of your time.

Don't do any free u if rest, relaxation, and undisturbed peace are what you seek, but, if dogged pursuit and tireless energy describe your nature better, then the signs are right for you to get into a free u.

DEPENDENT FREE U's

Free u's on college campuses are usually created by the passage of a bill in the student senate and administrative approval. They require:

Advisors. Not all free u's have faculty advisors, but some colleges require that all student organizations have faculty advisors. Find a faculty member who agrees to sponsor the free u. If you have a choice, get a tenured faculty member.

Statement of Purpose. The free u should have a statement describing its aims and how they will be carried out. Here are the kinds of purposes often included in statements:

- To raise questions that are not being discussed in the regular university's courses.
- To provide a means through which members of the university and community can jointly investigate problems and topics.
- To serve as a laboratory for educational experimentation which later can be applied to the university curriculum, to the free u, and to everyday living.

- To promote a broad variety of interesting and enjoyable learning opportunities.

- To provide a learning experience which cannot be offered, or is not being offered, within the present curriculum.

- To provide students with a place in which to test, exercise, and increase their own autonomy; to help students learn how to educate themselves.

- To demonstrate that students can and should take responsibility for their own education, and that when they do, better quality learning occurs.

Policy Boards. For the purposes of the free u to be carried out, boards are needed. These boards are responsible for all policy decisions including course approval, allocation of funds (received from other sources, generally student government), and appointment of the staff. Boards themselves should be defined in terms of purpose, membership (how many, how long, how selected), frequency of meetings, and to whom they are responsible.

Staff. Policy board members elect coordinators for the free u. Some sort of guidelines for staff should be agreed on—particularly with respect to:

- Responsibility (for example, carry out policies of the board, schedule groups, make periodic reports to the council, coordinate activities of the free u, aid course organizers, produce a listing of all courses);

- Selection: staff members are often, but not always, selected from the board;

- Tenure;

- Salary: this is determined by the policy board.

INDEPENDENT FREE U's

If free u's were isolated, small, self-contained rural communities, they would not need to become involved with the legalities of the larger society. But since they're not, some attention should be given early to the legal complications that arise in dealing with larger groups of people. Two pertinent legal statuses, incorporation and tax exemption, are worth investigating.

Get a lawyer early. Talk with a lawyer and, if you can find one, an accountant. Legal forms and accounting procedures can be dispatched quickly by those familiar with them. If you want to risk mistakes and can afford to spend a lot of time, do it yourself; otherwise, find some

sympathetic lawyer who is willing to get it through the legal red tape and an accountant to set up the bookkeeping system.

Incorporation

Incorporation does two important things: 1) it limits the liability of individuals involved in the free university with respect to damage and debt collection; and 2) it makes the organization eligible for nonprofit status and therefore for tax-deductible contributions.

Corporations are chartered by the state. Each organization which wants to become a corporation (and be eligible for the two above benefits) files two forms: articles of incorporation and by-laws.

The articles require the name and location of the corporation, names of incorporators, and a statement of purpose (e.g., "The establishment and administration of a community learning center"). Be sure to include in the articles the statement that the corporation is organized solely for nonprofit purposes.

The by-laws require that the authority of the corporation be delegated to officers and to a board of directors. By-Laws describe how, in particular, the purposes are to be carried out.

Nonprofit Status

Once you're incorporated, apply for nonprofit status as a "clearinghouse to bring together instructors and interested students in a community for purposes of instruction." If you are approved later as a nonprofit organization, the corporation (free u) is exempt from federal income taxes. Donations given to the free university are tax-deductible to the donor. (Employees, however. must pay income taxes.)

Apply for both state and federal nonprofit status (Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code) at the same time. State status is generally gained quickly; federal takes longer. Apply early for the federal nonprofit status through the Internal Revenue Service (Form 1023). If you've used a lawyer and gotten state nonprofit status, you can generally ride on that for a year until the federal status is obtained.

Keep the books simple and clear. Get an accounts book or ruled ledger. While the Internal Revenue Service does not require any one particular accounting system, you must record income (how much you take in, from whom, when) and expenditures (on what is money spent, when). Save receipts. Be precise and keep your books up to date. The best way, but not always the most convenient, is to have one person who is good at figures be the only one who can enter and withdraw funds.[2]

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[2] For a more extensive discussion of incorporation and tax-exemption, see *Alternative Schools: A Practical Manual*, Center for Law and Education, 38 Kirkland Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138. Free.

Insurance

There are some other protections which you will want to look into. Liability insurance covers bodily injury and property damage for the building in which the free u is located. It can generally be bought for less than $100 a year. Group accident insurance covers medical expenses and life insurance. Workmen's compensation insurance can be provided for any paid staff members.

Chapter Sixteen
money and free universities

Money is the bane of many free u's. Most handle finances carelessly. Few, if any, work out long-range budget plans. When, under the guise of lack of concern or time for monetary contingencies, free u's make no effort to work out their budgets, they risk bankruptcy. Free u's have been closed, in the past, by debts.

The wisest way to handle finances is to separate the money operation from other operations of the free u. Find someone who is articulate, anxious to accept the challenge of developing the organization, and an effective "front person." This person should be responsible for developing all proposals, pursuing contacts, following leads, speaking to community groups, and soliciting tax-deductible contributions. Have other people recruit instructors, work on brochures, and do the other work of the free u. If you need money, you need to have one person primarily responsible for getting it.

DEPENDENT FREE U's

Most dependent free u's are funded by the student governments on college campuses. Each year they get a couple hundred dollars to pay for publicity and materials. All facilities (office, room for group meetings) are provided at no cost to the free university.

Some free u's are much larger though and their budgets go as high as $5,000 to $12,000 each year. A sample budget of a larger dependent free u is that of the Center for Participant Education:

travel	$ 100.00
supplies	500.00
telephone	120.00
postage	100.00
printing	700.00
publicity	280.00
repairs	50.00
reimbursement for discussion group materials	1,800.00
special programs	2,900.00
contingencies	347.73
EXPENSES	6,897.73

director salary	1,080.00
secretary salary	1,664.00
other personnel salaries	960.00
SALARIES	3,704.00
TOTAL	$10,601.73

Money Sources

Student Governments. Student governments allocate their funds each spring for the following academic year. Budget reviews often begin in February and continue through April for the following fiscal year (July through June). Requests are considered first by a budget review committee which then recommends to the appropriate legislative body (student senate) that it approve a specific amount for the free u. A majority of the members must approve your budget before you can be sure of your existence the following academic year.

Don't depend on the worthiness of your ideas and program to carry you through. Each year many worthy projects request funds; all cannot be satisfied. Find out who is on the budget review committee. Meet personally with each member, explain what you need the funds for. Become more than an abstract program. Find out who your strongest supporters are and who may be the strongest opponents. Attend meetings *before* your budget is scheduled to be considered. Look at the criteria used by members to evaluate proposals. Listen to the kinds of questions asked by each member. Prepare thoroughly.

The budget review committee is just the first step. Next comes the official one of realignments and ratification by the student senate. Before the budget meeting, talk to as many individual senators as possible. Ask whether individuals foresee possible problems. Around budget time, attend each meeting of the senate. This attention is suggested because twice during the past term (spring 1972) I received reports from angry coordinators of free u's that the issue of the free u was brought up unexpectedly at a senate meeting. Each time, senators were attempting to scuttle the free u for their own pet projects. Both free u's emerged without real harm because the coordinators had been alert and had mustered enough support in the senate to withstand the attacks.

Work-Study Awards. Each year, academic departments may award a certain number of work-study positions. Such positions can be used to pay the coordinator and/or half-time secretary of the free u. You might also be able to get a department to award a teaching assistantship or research position to a graduate student for working with the free u (this has been done). There are never enough work-study or teaching/research

assistantships, so get your requests in early (by December of the year before the one you seek the position for).

Special Programs. Free u's sponsor crafts sales, speakers, artists, magazines, booklets and whole earth fairs. Don't expect these special projects to account for any more than a couple hundred dollars annually. If you have something you really must do and don't have the money for it, there's money available somewhere. Try the president of the school, the program advisor, department chairmen, and heads of student governments. Departments of continuing and adult education, the arts, and the humanities divisions have also contributed to free u's. Look in *FUD: Free University Directory* for other sources of funds.

Storm Warning

The authority of student governments to disburse funds is subject to state regulations and the amount of funds they have to distribute. Student government funds are subject to the influence of campus politics and personalities. Many colleges and universities are in bad financial trouble. In a stringent economy, one of the first areas to be cut is "non-essential services"—that is, everything except buildings and faculty. Other political pressures compound the current situation. Legislators in some states have voted to repeal mandatory student fees. This is how students were able to gather their funds in the past. The combination of these uncertainties clouds the future of the free u's and has prompted some to move off campus, sever fiscal ties, and become independent.

INDEPENDENT FREE U's

Some independent free u's plan initially to survive on voluntary, unspecified contributions by members. Initiators think that if people experience a worthwhile thing, they'll want to pay to keep it available for themselves and others. Rather than assess people in advance for an unknown product, they reason, only those people who have worthwhile experiences should support the free u. In this way, the free u's existence is dependent on the consumer's evaluation of the educational experience.

This thinking is fine, but it has two deficiencies. First, people are not used to retroactive voluntary payments. They're used to sacrificing in order to get something not in their possession. Second, most free u's do not continue long enough to reap the benefits of changed attitudes. As a result, many have resorted to expecting small advance fees.

Fees and No Fees

Either free u's have virtually no budgets, existing on less than $100 a year, or they incorporate as nonprofit educational institutions to charge

fees. When they do this, they pay rent, telephone, utilities, advertising, and coordinators' salaries.

The choice should be seriously considered. The relatively big-budget free u is a complex operation. In order to pay expenses, organizers find that term enrollments have to average around 500 people (see Chapter 8 on enrollments). Coordinators can become more concerned with enrollment figures than with what's needed by the community, why the free u was started, or how to strengthen the alternatives already available. Larger investments of material and time shift the focus to how many people enroll, whether they've paid the fees, expense accountings, and budget balance. It may be elementary, but it is important to know that entry into the economic system changes the nature of most programs. Your involvement changes from an avocational to a vocational one. This is okay, but make sure, before you do it, that it's what you really want to do.

Money Sources

Tuition. Free u's that charge tuition fees have incorporated as nonprofit institutions. Fees range from 50c to $15 per term. They support the free u by paying the rent, publicity, telephone, utilities, and salaries.

Donations. Donations to nonprofit tax-exempt corporations are tax-deductible. Talk with people in community agencies, businessmen, and others who may be able to donate something.

Foundations. Foundations have not been much help to free u's, but there's always hope for the future. If you decide to try for foundation support, prepare a proposal (make it simple and short) stating why you need support, how it will be used, and the significance of what you are doing. Work first on the foundations and companies nearest you, particularly the ones in your state. Also hit others listed as interested in anything that relates to your proposal. The grantsman's 'Bible' is the Russell Sage *Foundation Directory* (located in most libraries).

But don't depend on foundations. Few free u's have found them to be helpful. The creator of *The Whole Earth Catalog,* Stewart Brand, relates his experience:

> On Free Money: From my limited experience, the realm of foundations and grants is one of the most cynical in the American economy. Generally when you approach a foundation they are friendly and half-receptive. They consider your project promising if a little naive. and they'd like you to write up a proposal on it. You spend a month learning how to write proposals and a month writing this one. They keep it six months. Your idea has died of dry rot. Then they request that you re-write the proposal to accommodate (whatever) and it might go through next time the board meets. Do this three times. and *you* have died of dry rot . . .
>
> I don't know why foundation and government money is so often toxic to projects.

Maybe because the process becomes so easily dishonest. Do me no favors, and I'll tell you no lies. Or is it the belief that there's such a thing as a free lunch that is the root lie?[1]

Special Projects. Sometimes free u's are instrumental in forming food, artist, book, or garage cooperatives. Coops are businesses which are owned by members, who receive part of the profits of the organization. If there is a coop in your community, see whether its managers would allow people to designate the free university as the recipient of end-of-the-year returns. Denver Free University has an arrangement with a coop bookstore where purchasers donate their profit to the free u by placing the amount of the purchase under a special free u account at the time of the purchase. It's easier for people to donate money that they never see than it is to get them to give money already in their pockets.

There are many creative ways of earning money. Here are descriptions of two money-raising techniques that are certainly imaginative, although probably too ambitious for most free u's:

> The Counter-Economy seminar at the Free University of Berkeley, which we coordinate, has formed an organizing committee to apply for a charter for a credit union of the members of the Free U. . . . The class has laid out $30 in fees, which will be reimbursed as soon as the credit union begins to wail. The class polled its 23 members and discovered that all together they had $7,910 (!!!) sitting in banks doing nothing socially, morally, existentially, or esthetically justifiable—money that could be easily liberated and sluiced back into a community of friends and neighbors. This credit union will consolidate the economic resources of people who belong to the Free U and use them to fund potentially self-sustaining cooperative businesses- -an automobile repair service, for instance, and a dress maker's coop—by making loans to members. . . . There's one problem with credit union loans—they can only be made to members who are likely to repay—they aren't grants.[2]

> Leopold's, Berkeley's nonprofit record store, raised a $2,500 grant for a legal defense fund during the Cambodia-Kent State crises by asking people to pay a 'voluntary tax' of 25c an album. The class has discussed the possibility of collecting a 'voluntary tax' at the credit union—25c per transaction, say, toward an 'alternative community chest' that would be allocated by proportional vote of the membership to community institutions that won't be able to pay the money back, like the free clinic.[3]

Staff Aid: Independent and Work-Study Students. Free u's have served as work or field positions for off-campus study. Antioch College has placed students in free u's; local colleges with off-campus study programs, field

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[1] Stewart Brand, *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* (California, 1971), p. 186.

[2] Craig and Alison Karpel. *The Last Whole Earth Catalog, op. cit.*

[3] *Ibid.*

terms, University Without Walls programs, and broad independent study options may be receptive to giving credit for community work.

These people are often invaluable, imaginative, and willing. If this kind of staffing is to have long range impact, make sure that the new projects are carried over and developed by new local people after the term is done. In this way, both new ideas and new community people are brought to the free u.

Federal Government. The Office of Economic Opportunity has funded free u-type ventures which use existing facilities and resources to bring education to people without access to college. In addition, under the "Education Amendments of 1972" (approved June 23, 1972), nonprofit institutions that seek to improve postsecondary educational opportunities are eligible for funds. Specifically, three aims of such funding (Section 404a) are:

> 1) encouraging the reform, innovation, and improvement of postsecondary education, and providing equal educational opportunity for all;
>
> 2) the creation of institutions and programs involving new paths to career and professional training, and new combinations of academic and experimental learning; . . .
>
> 6) the introduction of institutional reforms designed to expand individual opportunities for entering and reentering institutions and pursuing programs of study tailored to individual needs.

In the spring of 1972, one free u received a grant under the Law Enforcement Assistance Act to assess the educational and recreational needs and interests of adolescents in its community (junior and senior high schoolers).

Does Outside Funding Change the Nature of the Free U?

There are several reasons to be cautious about the use of outside funds: 1) the nature of your program will probably change; 2) healthy ventures should be economically self-supporting; 3) if all education is publicly supported, from where does the impetus for change come? and 4) who can forecast the requirements, implicit and explicit, after dependence has been secured?

Probably one of the greatest problems of free u's, and of alternate institutions in general, is finances. The alternate culture shuns conventional economic methods of gathering support, but it has not developed ways to support its own people. As a result, free u's usually fall back on conventional means: tuition fees or grants from other organizations.

The debate about relationships between alternate and traditional institutions continues. Some free u people advocate a total divorce from traditional institutions. That involves developing an independent reward and money system (credit banks, alternate community chests, barter econ-

omies, more intense citizen involvement) and refusing aid from other agencies of society. This isn't easy. So in order to survive, many free u's seek outside money. When they get it, they depend on it; this dependence changes the nature of their operations. An alternate institution that is funded by a dominant institution behaves differently from one that is not. While free u's with more income are more likely to finish out the year than the struggling penny-conscious institutions, they are also more prone to grow fat, collect staff, amass debts, mechanize work, and isolate themselves from their community.

Outside funding should not support the core of the free u; if it's cut off, the free u must be able to go on. Community support is the best insurance.

Chapter Seventeen
Courses

HOW TO FIND COURSE ORGANIZERS

Every community is different. Sometimes free u coordinators are overwhelmed by the number of people who want to do something for the free u; othertimes, there is no one. Some people will come to offer to organize a course. Others, who are just as knowledgeable, have to be personally invited, encouraged to try sharing with others what they know, and made to recognize that even though they've never taught before, they can do it. At the Free School in New Haven, Connecticut, a man who had never taught before had to be convinced that others would want to learn silk-screening. Once he started, his course was one of the most popular given.

Often free u's put advertisements in the local newspapers inviting all who want to teach to do so. These bring in a few new people, but personal contacts bring in more. People need to be reassured that the purpose of the free u is to share and learn together rather than to "know-it-all." Enthusiasm, knowledge of where to go for resources, a keen personal love of the subject, and a desire to do it with others are most important.

Find new instructors by going to different community sources. Ask local ministers whether there are people in their congregations who have special talents they might want to transmit to others. Speak to the Rotarians for ideas and people; they just might want to arrange a few meetings for a greater cross section of the community to come together to discuss specific problems.

Find faculty members who want to teach something in a new way or teach something they do not already teach. Talk to the local soda jerk to find out whether he'll teach others how to make super milkshakes. Collar the student who spends every afternoon and evening in the local pool hall: perhaps he could give an exhibition, teach a few lessons, or lead a discussion on how to walk into the pool hall and psych out potential opponents.

Encourage as much diversity as possible. One way is to make course topics vary as much as possible. Another is to recruit different kinds of people: middle-class, lower class, cognitive, affective, religious, agnostic, young, old, black, white, chicano, Indian, Asian. *What* you are doing is often not as important as *who's* doing it.

ERIC Full Text Provided by ERIC

Vary formats and responsibilities. Some people without the time or confidence to develop a total course will take part if a panel, one-evening workshop, or discussion session is planned. Later, they may choose to plan their own groups, to participate in other sessions, or to do the same workshops with new resource people.

A FEW THINGS TO BE CAREFUL ABOUT

Usually the director of a free u is the one who decides whether to implement suggestions for courses. Few courses have been denied facilities or sponsorship, but there are guidelines, informally used by different free u's, to decide whether or not to sponsor a course.

Course Title, Description, and Material Needs. These are submitted by the course organizer. The title submitted should describe the content as accurately as possible. In this way, brochures include accurate course descriptions to help students determine whether or not they will get what they expect out of the course. Without accurate descriptions of content, people are mislead and later often disappointed. To encourage carefully thought out and articulated aims, some free u's ask for specific sub-topics, learning and teaching methods to be used (field trips, participant responsibility, case study method), and any projected material needs (equipment, texts, etc.).

Legality of the Course. In some states, legislative statutes deny the use of state funds (free u's sometimes "use" them by meeting in university facilities) for teaching such subjects as the overthrow of the government, Communism, and birth control.

Competence of the Instructor. Usually, anyone who volunteers can organize the group. However, some dependent free u's require "certified" expertise—as determined by occupational position (faculty member, professional status, carpenter) or letters of certification from several people who are recognized as knowledgeable in the area. My advice is to stay out of instructor evaluation and credentials. Take the word of the individuals volunteering.

Cost of the Course. Some people, often yoga specialists and hypnotists, try to charge fees for courses they lead. During the first session or soon thereafter, they ask for contributions ranging from $.50 a session to $50 a term. To protect against instructors who fail to mention the financial details of their "voluntary" commitment, some free u's specify that no fees can be collected by instructors. If additional course fees are allowed, insist that they be clearly specified beforehand in the catalog. If people know the expectations, they can decide individually whether or not to participate.

HOW TO GET CREDIT FOR FREE U COURSES

Only academic departments can award official university course credit. Students can't. Approval for all courses must come from: 1) individual faculty member; 2) department chairman; 3) dean of the division; and 4) chief academic affairs officer. Usually the last two are rubber stamps: the difficulty of approval decreases at each step in the hierarchy.

Within almost every institution of higher learning there are mechanisms by which faculty can give credit for individualized student work and students can get credit for independent or unusual projects. In recent years, it has become possible for faculty to organize new courses for one term without waiting the year or so it takes to get through the usual channels.

Sample Guidelines

SEARCH, a student office at the University of Oregon, requires these guidelines for each proposed course:

a) Course Topic: A clear definition of the subject proposed. Example:
"The Novel and the Film"—a comparative view of the two mediums as literary vehicles.

b) Course Objectives: Why the topic chosen? Example:
To demonstrate that the novel and the film are separate literary mediums and not to be compared on their performance on a given work. In addition, it will give an understanding of the techniques used in the visual medium of film making such as symbols, lighting, etc.

c) Course Purpose: Why is the course proposed? Will the course utilize new techniques or methods in material presentation or does it cover a timely topic or a topic not offered in the formal curriculum? Example:
"The Novel and the Film" is not offered by the formal curriculum and will utilize a method of teaching by comparison of two major literary vehicles.

d) Instructor Approval: Is a member of the faculty willing to sponsor the course and assume its ultimate responsibility?

e) Evidence: Is the course not adequately treated in the formal curriculum?

f) Proposed Class Structure: Is the class to be a seminar, to use field trips, have guest lectures, etc.?

g) Attendance Restrictions: Is the course to be restricted or limited in any way to student or community attendance? Is there a restriction to lower division, upper division or graduate students?

h) Student Support: Is there evidence that student support exists for the topic to be given as a scheduled course?

Know the Procedures. Read the college catalog. Look for independent study course numbers (199, 299, 399 usually), special studies options (designed for innovative, short-term, experimental topics), problem or field work courses (usually at the upper division level).

Look for an appropriate "fit" between topic and department. If the topic is black studies, for example, you might consider the departments of sociology, political science, history, psychology, and education. Try the most natural departments first, but don't stop there. If physical education won't credit Frisbee as an appropriate subject for learning, don't despair: go to architecture (which, in one case, did offer Frisbee for credit) or physics.

Find a faculty sponsor. Sponsorship is the most important step. The faculty member carries it through the department and the rest of the steps.

Obtain Approval. Approval comes first from the head of the department, then from the dean of the division, and finally from the chief officer for academic affairs. Once the course has gotten departmental approval, regular procedures usually carry it through the remaining channels.

Do You Really Want To Provide Credit?

Some free u's have decided *not* to make credit available for their courses. In the purest sense, people should want the free u experience for its own merits rather than for other rewards. The addition of credit makes the student less free. It forces the student to attend, to do something, to follow through and to perform. For an institution that believes that people should be free to learn whatever, whenever, and however they want, the introduction of credits (and hence grading of some kind) can be stifling.

wind up

Most reports end with a concluding chapter which, in this case, would be a statement of "where I think the free universities are going from here." That will not be included here because projections and long range growth plans contradict the free university spirit. The important thing is that free u's do have a future. Their form may change; curricula will not be constant; but individuals will continue to express themselves by creating opportunities complementary, if not in opposition, to those already available. Other conclusions have been formed throughout the manuscript. They need not be restated here.

What is important to restate though is the kind of joy, excitement, enthusiasm (if you will) that I continue to feel about these haphazard, disorganized, often naive attempts to join people in communication. Free u's come directly out of the tradition of free spirit, critical inquiry, and pioneering individualism that has characterized much of American life. By questioning, challenging, creating, and being, they testify to the presence of freedom and hope. They come during a time when the voices of individuals seem increasingly faint. As an institutional form, they may be a "time-unique" phenomenon, but there's no doubt that such expressions of individualistic pluralism will continue.

index